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ABSTRACT

This monograph, part of a series on student assessment, reports on the results of a national survey that examined institutional support for undergraduate student assessment. It provides a national profile of student assessment initiatives at baccalaureate institutions and compares it to assessment practices and support patterns found in all types of postsecondary institutions. The study also offers advice for administrators, faculty, and staff in baccalaureate institutions who are designing student assessment approaches and support processes that are likely to foster institutional improvement. Also included is the survey instrument used to gather study data, which institutions can use to examine patterns for student assessment on their own campuses. The monograph is organized in nine sections: (1) "Introduction and Overview"; (2) "Perspectives on Student Assessment in Higher Education"; (3) "The Influence of External Groups"; (4) "Approaches to Student Assessment"; (5) "Organizational and Administrative Support Patterns"; (6) "Assessment Management Practices and Policies"; (7) "Uses and Impacts of Student Assessment"; (8) "Key Relationships"; and (9) "Executive Summary: Research Results and Recommendations." Appended is the survey instrument, the "Inventory of Institutional Support for Student Assessment for Baccalaureate Institutions," and information on the construction and content of variables. (Contains 42 references.) (SM)

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Designing Student Assessment to Strengthen Institutional Performance in Baccalaureate Institutions

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1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This monograph reports the results of a national research survey that examines institutional support for undergraduate student assessment. It provides a national profile of student assessment initiatives at baccalaureate institutions; useful advice for administrators, faculty, and staff who are designing student assessment approaches and support processes that are likely to foster institutional improvement; and an instrument that institutions can use to examine patterns for student assessment on their own campuses.

This report is a result of the National Center for Postsecondary Improvement (NCPI) research program examining organizational and administrative support for student assessment. In 1997-98, NCPI researchers conducted a major literature review followed by a national survey on institutional support for student assessment. While other dissemination efforts have focused on a research audience, this report is specifically written for administrators, faculty, and staff in baccalaureate institutions who are involved with student assessment on their campuses.

Purpose of the Monograph

Administrators and faculty leaders have little credible and verifiable evidence to guide their planning and decision making regarding student assessment. The literature on student assessment offers many descriptions of student assessment practices at a variety of postsecondary institutions (Banta & Associates, 1993; Banta, Lund, Black, & Oblander, 1996) and a number of limited surveys have collected information concerning student assessment measures and methods used by focused groups of institutions (Cowart, 1990; El-Khawas, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1996; Johnson, Prus, Andersen, & El Khawas, 1991). There has been comparatively less consideration of how colleges and universities can develop an effective institutional strategy for assessment or of organizational and administrative practices that support internal engagement in assessment and enhance the use of student assessment data. Guidelines for planning and implementing student assessment efforts are available (American Association for Higher Education [AAHE], 1992; Ewell, 1988a, 1988b; Rossman & El-Khawas, 1987) but largely missing is any systematic examination of the relationships among various ways institutions have approached and supported student assessment and the likelihood of their reaping positive impacts from student assessment efforts (Banta et al., 1996; Ewell, 1988b; Gray & Banta, 1997). Furthermore, there has been little research focused specifically on student assessment within baccalaureate institutions.

Understanding the national profile of undergraduate assessment activities and support patterns found in baccalaureate institutions is important for several reasons. First, it is helpful for institutions to know what their peers are doing in relation to student assessment. How are other institutions responding to external demands for student assessment? What approaches to student assessment are they using? How are they supporting and promoting student assessment through their practices and policies? How are they using student assessment data? What impacts has student assessment had on faculty as well as institutional and student performance? Finally, if student assessment activities do make a difference in terms of improved teaching and learning on campuses, how does that happen? What external influences, institutional approaches, and organizational and administrative support practices encourage internal involvement in student assessment and positive impacts from student assessment data?

This monograph will answer these questions through three primary purposes. First, it will provide a national profile of current student assessment practices and institutional support patterns within baccalaureate institutions and compare this to assessment practices and support patterns found in other types of postsecondary institutions. A second major purpose is to provide advice for administrators, faculty, and staff in baccalaureate institutions on designing student assessment

approaches and support processes that are likely to foster institutional improvement. Finally, this report includes the survey instrument used to gather data for this study in Appendix A. Institutions can use this inventory to examine student assessment patterns on their own campuses.

We will discuss the student assessment methods used by institutions in this report, but it is not our intent to examine the specific instruments used or the measurement issues associated with their use. For a detailed literature review on student assessment, please consult Improving Organizational and Administrative Support for Student Assessment: A Review of the Research Literature (Peterson, Einarson, Trice, & Nichols, 1997). The data from our survey research have been summarized in several forms including numerous conference papers and journal articles, and a technical report entitled Institutional Support for Student Assessment: Methodology and Results of a National Survey (Peterson, Einarson, Augustine, & Vaughan, 1999). Readers who are interested in the statistical analyses conducted on the student assessment data should consult the technical report. While this report relies on those statistical analyses, it will not provide extensive statistical details.

Definition of Student Assessment

Our focus in this report is on undergraduate student assessment from an institutional perspective. We are interested in what approach institutions use to assess student performance, how institutions are organized to promote and support student assessment, and how they use student assessment data to improve student and faculty performance.

In this monograph, we use the term student assessment to refer to activities other than traditional end-of-course grading that are used to measure a diverse array of dimensions of student performance or development. Institutions may decide to engage in student assessment for a variety of reasons or differing purposes. Cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of student performance and development may be assessed. Assessment efforts may be directed toward students as they enter the institution, during their enrollment, or after they exit from the institution. Student assessment may use a variety of methods and may be planned and executed centrally within institutions or in a decentralized manner through the actions of individual academic units. This report will address all these dimensions of student assessment.

Preview of the Monograph

This report is presented in nine sections. Following this introduction, the second section, perspectives on student assessment, provides a brief recent history of the student assessment movement in general and in baccalaureate institutions specifically. The conceptual framework of institutional support for student assessment that was developed in the literature review (Peterson et al., 1997) and guided the development of the survey instrument is then presented. Section two ends with a brief summary of the methods used to conduct the research on institutional support for student assessment.

Sections three through seven present the results of a national survey on institutional support for student assessment. These sections parallel the domains in the framework. In each section, information is presented for both baccalaureate institutions and all institutions that responded to the study. Section three focuses on the influence of external groups, such as state agencies and accreditors, on institutional student assessment patterns. In this section, the influence of states on institutional student assessment activity is considered for public institutions only. Section four focuses on institutions' approaches to student assessment. This section is followed by a summary of the institution-wide support patterns evident in the study. Section six discusses assessment management policies and practices used by institutions to promote or assure the use of student assessment information. Section seven reports on the institutional uses and impacts of student assessment.

Section eight is based on the statistical analyses conducted on the national survey data. It presents the findings from analyses of three sets of key relationships examined in the study. The first focuses on the influence of external groups on institutional approaches to student assessment. The second examines the relationship of external influences, institutional context, assessment approaches, institution-wide support patterns, and assessment management practices and policies to the institutional uses of student assessment data. The third analysis examines the relationship of external influences, institutional context, assessment approaches, institution-wide support patterns, and assessment management practices and policies on the impacts of engaging in student assessment. Section nine presents a summary of our research findings and related recommendations for specific assessment activities within baccalaureate institutions. It concludes with general guidelines for institutions to use to examine and redesign or plan their student assessment process and functions.

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2. PERSPECTIVES ON STUDENT ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

An overview of the development of student assessment in higher education and in baccalaureate institutions suggests the need for the institutional perspective that guides this report. A guiding framework conceptualizes seven domains of an institution's student assessment strategy: institutional context, external influences, approach adopted, institutional support patterns, assessment management practices and policies, assessment culture and climate, and institutional uses and impacts of student assessment.

This monograph concurs with the perspective of other scholars of student assessment. We agree that at its best, student assessment is not simply an exercise to gather data or respond to accountability requirements. Rather, an effective student assessment approach is one that gathers information about selected aspects of students' characteristics, achievements, and experiences and uses this information to shape institutional policies, processes, and practices in ways that lead to improved student performance and institutional functioning (AAHE, 1992; Banta & Associates, 1993; Ewell, 1984, 1987c, 1988b; Jacobi, Astin & Ayala, 1987).

Growth of Student Assessment

The assessment of student performance in higher and postsecondary education is not a new concept or phenomenon. The first College Board examination designed to assess student learning outcomes on a national scale was administered in 1901. The ensuing decades are marked by events that reflect a growing concern with assessing college student performance, such as: the emergence of a regional accreditation focus on student assessment; the establishment of university-based and national testing centers; and the development of broadened taxonomies of student outcomes (Resnick & Goulden, 1987; Sims, 1992). However, these earlier developments pale in comparison to the emergence in the mid 1980s of student assessment as an important focus of educational policy at the national, state, and institutional level — a focus that continues today.

This heightened interest in student assessment is the result of many broad forces. In the larger societal and political arena, concerns about consumer protection, the rising costs of education, the training and human resource needs for state and regional economic development, and fiscal pressures on state and federal government all have shaped public interest in the educational contribution of higher education institutions. At the institutional level, the challenges of expansion in the 1950s and 60s, enrollment and financial constraints in the 1970s, and new educational demands in the 1980s have shifted the managerial focus of performance by higher education institutions from resource adequacy, to efficiency, to effectiveness, to broader concerns for academic and institutional quality. Consequently, over the past decade and a half the assessment and improvement of student performance has been the focus of much of this discussion and of many efforts both external to and within colleges and universities.

A variety of specific activities at the national level — reports, guidelines, legislation, educational goals, and funding — have been credited with providing the initial stimulus for the student assessment movement in higher education in the last decade and a half. A series of national reports that critically examined the quality of education were published in the mid 1980s. The first, A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), prompted calls for reform in elementary and secondary education. The following year Involvement in Learning: Realizing the Potential of American Higher Education (National Institute of Education, 1984) addressed the conditions required for improving the quality of undergraduate education. Institutions were given three recommendations: set high expectations for student learning, actively involve students in learning, and develop an institutionalized process for assessing student learning. Subsequent reports such as To Reclaim a Legacy: A Report on the

Humanities in Higher Education (Bennett, 1984) and Integrity in the College Curriculum: A Report to the Academic Community (Association of American Colleges, 1985) continued this focus on issues of undergraduate education quality and assessment. In 1988 the U.S. Department of Education revised its Criteria for Recognition of Accrediting Agencies, stipulating that agencies must require educational institutions and programs to (1) clearly specify their educational objectives and (2) conduct student assessment to determine whether they are achieving these standards. In addition, the enactment of legislation such as the "Student Right to Know and Campus Security Act" and "Ability to Benefit" legislation (Education Commission of the States, 1991), adoption of the National Education Goals (Lenth, 1993, 1996; Nettles, 1995), and provision of federal funds for the development of institutions' assessment projects (Cook, 1989) contributed to the early momentum of the assessment movement.

State governments, reflecting these national developments, have also played a key role in stimulating postsecondary student assessment. The first state-level mandate for student assessment appeared when the Florida state legislature directed the higher education system to develop the College-Level Academic Skills Test in 1982. Since then, the number of states involved in student assessment has increased steadily with all but four of fifty states now reporting some type of student assessment initiative (Cole, Nettles, & Sharp, 1997). States have varied greatly in their approaches to student assessment policy, but there is evidence of a general shift in state-level approaches over the past decade. From the mid to late 1980s state assessment initiatives generally emphasized institutional improvement as their primary purpose and largely permitted institutions to design their own assessment efforts. Since 1990, states have placed greater emphasis on student assessment as a means of responding to external demands for accountability and have increasingly elected to mandate the content and form of institutions' assessment approaches.

Regional accreditation associations also have emerged as an important influence on student assessment. Regional accrediting associations vary in the length of time they have been involved in student assessment, their specific reporting requirements, and the range of assessment-related services provided to member institutions (Cole et al., 1997). Since the federal government revised its criteria for recognizing accrediting agencies in 1988, all six regional accreditation associations have required member institutions to undertake and document some form of student assessment activity. In turn, a growing number of institutions have reported that accreditation requirements are an important reason for deciding to engage in and increase their student assessment efforts (El-Khawas, 1995; Johnson et al., 1991).

Since the mid 1980s the number of postsecondary institutions engaged in some form of student assessment activity has steadily increased (El-Khawas, 1988, 1990, 1995). However, by 1990 only a small proportion of institutions had embarked on comprehensive student assessment programs (El-Khawas, 1990; Hexter & Lippincott, 1990; Johnson et al., 1991). Fewer still have reported achieving observable impacts from their student assessment efforts (Astin, 1991; Hutchings & Marchese, 1990). So it seems that many colleges and universities are investing faculty and administrative time and effort in student assessment, but few are benefiting from its potential to improve student and institutional performance.

Characteristics of Baccalaureate Institutions

Institutional type is an important dimension to consider when examining the approach an institution takes toward student assessment. To date, there has been little examination of differences in effective organizational and administrative practices for promoting student assessment within specific types of institutions. Yet, effective strategies and practices for planning, promoting, and implementing undergraduate student assessment vary according to the type of postsecondary institution being considered — for example, what works in promoting student assessment in baccalaureate institutions will be different from what works in research institutions. In our national study of institutional support for student assessment, we found that

there were many statistically significant differences by institutional type on the approaches to, support for, practices and policies regarding, and uses and impacts of student assessment reported by institutions, and that they were typically stronger than differences by other institutional characteristics such as size or whether the institution is private or public.

The challenges baccalaureate institutions face as they develop student assessment programs are different from those faced by other institutions. These differences stem, in part, from the institutional mission, curricular focus, governance structure, faculty roles and responsibilities, and the student body typically associated with baccalaureate colleges.

The missions of baccalaureate institutions typically emphasize undergraduate education and teaching quality. Therefore, researchers have both speculated and found that student assessment activity is more valued and thus more prevalent in baccalaureate institutions than it is in other institutional types (Muffo, 1992; El-Khawas, 1993). In fact, our research found that baccalaureate institutions do collect more assessment data, at a statistically significant level, than do either associate of arts institutions or research universities (Peterson et al., 1999).

The curriculum at baccalaureate institutions typically focuses on a broad, liberal arts education. Despite the similarities of mission and curriculum among baccalaureate institutions, they tend to vary greatly by prestige. While many of these institutions are experiencing strong, steady enrollment, some have seen declining interest in their institution, perhaps due to students' desires for more vocationally-oriented educational experiences. In these cases, demonstrating through student assessment that students succeed both during college and after they graduate could become important tools for attracting new students. In fact, some of the leading institutions in the assessment movement are baccalaureate institutions (e.g., Alverno and King's College).

Baccalaureate institutions are typically among the least organizationally complex postsecondary institutions, in terms of the number of academic departments and structural units (Dill, 1997). The generally small institutional size and relative lack of organizational complexity should help make the design and implementation of an assessment program more manageable. However, because of the smaller size and less complex organization, the goals of both the faculty and the administration can drive assessment activities at baccalaureate institution; there may be less variance in assessment approaches at these institutions as discrete programs or units may be more tightly-coupled to the administration and to other units. At the more highly selective institutions, faculty are more likely to share power with administrators in academic decision making than are faculty at other baccalaureate institutions (Clark, 1987) and may therefore have more influence on assessment activities. A lack of autonomy at the less prestigious institutions suggests that administrators may have more influence over decisions to assess students.

Faculty characteristics at baccalaureate institutions may vary, also, depending on the prestige of the institution (Dill, 1997). Faculty at the more prestigious baccalaureate institutions tend to engage in more research and may focus less on teaching than do faculty at less prestigious institutions. Faculty who focus on research may be less interested in assessing student learning. On the other hand, faculty who focus on teaching may be less willing to engage in student assessment, as they typically have more limited research experience and expertise. Familiarity with conducting research is important in developing both comfort and skill in assessing students.

Students at the more elite baccalaureate institutions tend to perform quite well. In these cases, faculty may wonder if there is a need to assess them. On the other hand, less selective institutions tend to enroll students with varying academic abilities. In these institutions, student assessment may be highly valued due to both the varied student academic abilities and the focus on teaching.

Although prestige may be a mitigating factor in studying student assessment at baccalaureate institutions, we will not present results by prestige in this report. However, we received almost four times the number of surveys from "baccalaureate two" institutions (Carnegie, 1994) than we did from "baccalaureate one" institutions, indicating that our sample of baccalaureate institutions is well represented by the less selective institutions. This response rate is not surprising, given that in the general population of baccalaureate institutions, there are three times more baccalaureate colleges in the second category than in the first. Although the existing literature includes some single-institution and other limited institutional case studies of student assessment, it does not describe the current assessment activities conducted throughout the country by baccalaureate institutions.

A Framework of Institutional Support for Student Assessment

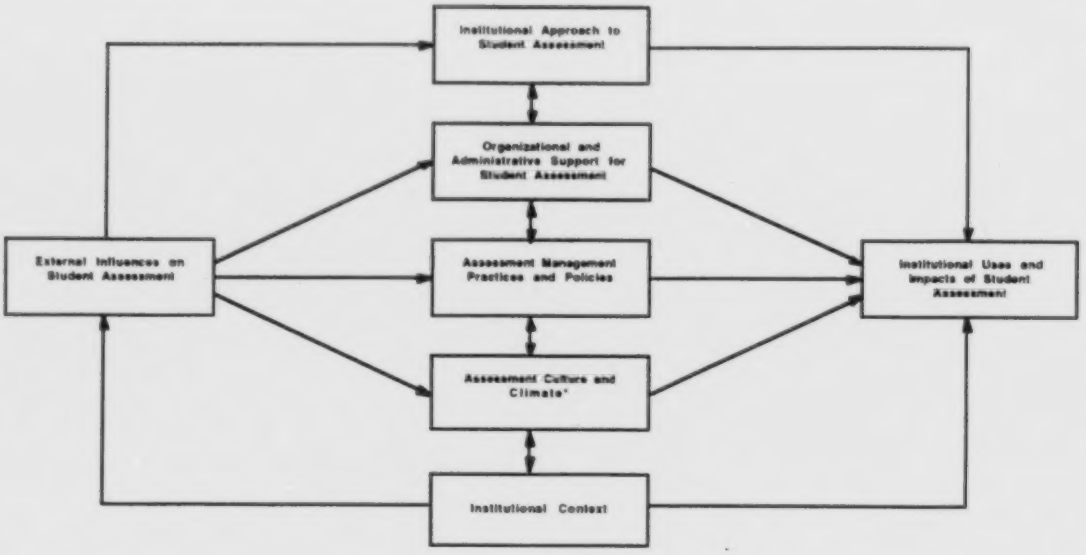
An institution's organizational and administrative context can be a powerful source of influence on administrators', faculty members' and students' behaviors and perceptions, shaping their views of what the institution values and which activities are important to engage in. Colleges and universities purposefully create a variety of structures, processes, policies and practices to support and implement student assessment. Institutions have varied greatly in their approaches to assessing student performance and the ways in which they have organized to support their assessment efforts, a finding that is hardly surprising given the great diversity and relative autonomy of colleges and universities in the American postsecondary system. Yet there is little systematic evidence available concerning the specific manner in which postsecondary institutions have organized to support student assessment and the differential results of these efforts. For these reasons, we have chosen to examine student assessment from a research-based and institutional perspective.

An extensive literature review identified what is currently known about the organizational and administrative context for student assessment in postsecondary institutions. A detailed description of the literature review process and findings is available in other publications (Peterson et al., 1999; Peterson et al., 1997). From this review, we developed a framework of institutional support for student assessment. This framework, displayed in Figure 1, consists of seven interacting domains. It conceptualizes how institutions respond to external pressures for student assessment, how they approach student assessment, the organizational and administrative patterns they use to support student assessment, what assessment practices and policies they have adopted to promote student assessment, their culture and climate for student assessment, and how student assessment information is used by and has impacts on institutions. A seventh domain, institutional context, reflects the fact that these patterns probably differ significantly by institutional type, size, and whether the institution is public or private. The culture and climate domain is not examined in this report and is the focus of future research activity. The other domains are briefly described below. A complete listing of the variables included in each domain is provided in Appendix B.

External Influences on Student Assessment. A variety of external constituencies have played an important role in initiating and shaping student assessment efforts within postsecondary institutions. In particular, state-level initiatives and regional accreditation associations may exert strong direct influences through their requirements for student assessment. The business community, private foundations, and professional higher education associations may serve as weaker sources of influence — whether as participants in institutions' assessment efforts, as consultants or sources of resource materials, or as providers of funds for assessment-related activities. National efforts appear to have largely played an indirect role in influencing institutions' assessment efforts.

Institutional Approach to Student Assessment. Institutional approach to student assessment refers to institutions' decisions regarding the collection and analysis of student assessment information. Important dimensions along which student assessment approaches can be

Figure 1. Framework of Institutional Support for Student Assessment


Institutional Approach to Student Assessment
Organizational and Administrative Support for Student Assessment
External Influences on Student Assessment
Assessment Management Practices and Policies
Institutional Uses and Impacts of Student Assessment
Assessment Culture and Climate*
Institutional Context

*This domain is not addressed in this study

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differentiated include: the type or content of student assessment measures the extent or array of student assessment data collected; the instruments and methods used to collect student assessment data; and the analyses conducted and reported for collected data.

Organizational and Administrative Support for Student Assessment. The literature on student assessment identifies five important dimensions of organizational or administrative behavior patterns that may support student assessment efforts and enhance the likelihood that assessment will contribute to improvements in institutional performance: the institution-wide support strategy for student assessment; institution-wide administrative and governance activities used to promote student assessment; leadership and faculty support for student assessment; planning and coordination of student assessment; and procedures used to evaluate and revise student assessment efforts.

Assessment Management Practices and Policies. Assessment management practices and policies refer to specific practices, policies, procedures, or activities intentionally devised by institutions to implement and support their student assessment efforts. A number of content activity areas of this domain have been identified including academic resource allocation; student information systems; internal access to student information; distribution of assessment reports and studies; student involvement in assessment; professional development for student assessment; training for student affairs staff; faculty evaluation and rewards; and academic planning and review processes.

Institutional Uses and Impacts of Student Assessment. Institutions can use the information collected through student assessment processes to contribute to improvement in institutional and student performance. Three broad domains of institutional uses and impacts of student assessment information are suggested in the literature. These are the use of assessment information for institutional decision making, its impact on various internal constituents and phenomena, and its impact on the institution's relationships with its external constituents.

Institutions may use assessment information within several areas of academic decision making such as academic planning and review academic mission and goals, resource allocation and faculty evaluation and rewards. Student assessment information may have both internal impacts, such as stimulating faculty interest in teaching, and external impacts, such as influencing state funding or re-accreditation decisions. The primary concern of our framework is to examine the relationship of external influences, institutions' assessment approaches, patterns of organizational and administrative support for assessment, and assessment management practices and policies with institutional uses and impacts of assessment information.

Institutional Context. Broad institutional characteristics such as institutional type, size, and whether the institution is public or private are expected to moderate external influences on assessment, the institutional approach to student assessment, organizational and administrative support patterns, assessment management practices and policies, and institutional uses and impacts of assessment information.

Description of National Survey

Based on our review of the student assessment literature, we developed a survey instrument or inventory called "Institutional Support for Student Assessment" (ISSA). The instrument focuses on the assessment of undergraduate students conducted by postsecondary institutions — not individual faculty or academic sub-units within institutions. The instrument is designed as a comprehensive inventory of external influences on institutions' student assessment efforts, institutional approaches to student assessment, organizational and administrative support patterns for student assessment, assessment management practices and policies used, and institutional uses and impacts of student assessment information. The instrument was intended to

assist institutions in obtaining a clear picture of their own student assessment efforts, to provide a national profile of undergraduate student assessment efforts in postsecondary institutions, and to increase current understanding of how institutions can engage in and promote student assessment that produces positive impacts on academic, student and institutional performance. A copy of the survey instrument is included in Appendix A.

In January 1998, the ISSA instrument was mailed to the chief academic administrator at all postsecondary institutions recognized by the U.S. Office of Education that offer undergraduate programs at the associate or baccalaureate degree level, excluding proprietary and specialized institutions. Completed surveys were received from 1,393 of the 2,524 institutions meeting these criteria for an overall response rate of 55%. Baccalaureate institutions were well represented in the survey responses. We received a total of 316 surveys from baccalaureate institutions -- more than half of the baccalaureate institutions (53%) to whom instruments were mailed chose to complete and return the survey. In addition, more than half of eligible public and private baccalaureate institutions participated, and survey responses were quite evenly distributed across states and accrediting regions. Given this strong and diversified response rate, we are able to offer a representative profile of undergraduate student assessment activities undertaken in baccalaureate institutions. Throughout this report we compare student assessment activities within baccalaureate institutions to student assessment activities within all responding institutions, including baccalaureate institutions.

3. THE INFLUENCE OF EXTERNAL GROUPS

Examines state and regional accreditation association requirements and external sources of support for student assessment. While both states and regional accrediting agencies have influenced institutions to engage in student assessment, accrediting associations are reported to have greater influence than states on baccalaureate institutions' assessment initiatives.

State officials and regional accreditation associations have increasingly required postsecondary institutions to become engaged in student assessment. Together with professional associations and private foundations, they have also offered various services to support institutions' student assessment efforts. There has been relatively little examination of institutions' perceptions of and experiences with these external groups. To examine this domain, our survey included questions concerning: state requirements for student assessment; regional accreditation association requirements for student assessment; and external sources of support for student assessment. The following sections address each of these areas in turn. In considering the state role in student assessment, we will focus only on public baccalaureate institutions. We will consider all baccalaureate institutions in the examination of the regional accrediting role in student assessment.

State Role in Student Assessment

States have varied widely in the development and content of their initiatives for postsecondary student assessment (Cole et al., 1997). To examine the role of state influences in some detail, the survey asked for institutions' perceptions of three dimensions of state assessment plans: the development process and reporting requirements of state assessment plans; the influence of state requirements on institutions' assessment efforts; and state review of institutions' assessment plans or processes. These questions were directed to state-funded institutions only.

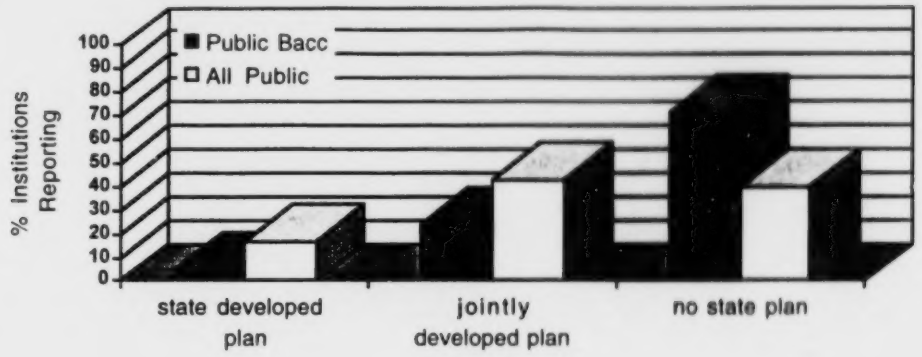
Development and Reporting Requirements of State Assessment Plans

Development. Scholars have suggested that the influence of state assessment initiatives on institutions' assessment efforts may depend on whether or not institutions have had input in the development of the initiatives. Survey respondents were asked to indicate whether their state's plan for student assessment was developed primarily by state officials, through joint consultation between state officials and institutional representatives, or whether no state plan or requirement for student assessment existed. Responses from baccalaureate and all institutions receiving state funding are displayed in Figure 2.

The majority of baccalaureate institutions receiving state funding report that there is no state plan for student assessment (71%). Of the remainder who say there is a state plan, most report that it was developed jointly by both state officials and campus representatives (24%). Only 5% report that the state plan for student assessment was developed solely by state officials. Compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions are much more likely to report that there is no state plan for assessment.

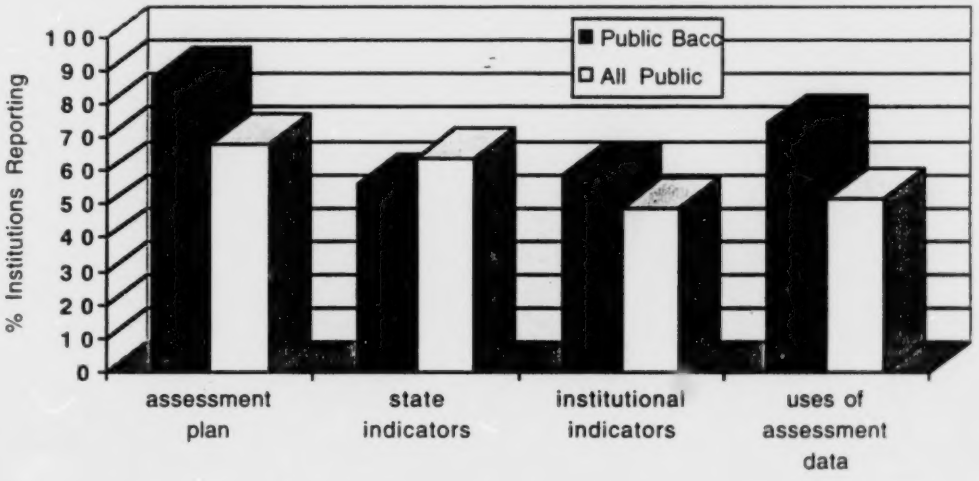
Reporting Requirements. Scholars also contend that the influence of state assessment initiatives will vary with the specific nature of the reporting requirements associated with these initiatives. What types of information are institutions required to report to state officials? We asked institutions with state plans for assessment which of the following types of information they

Figure 2. Development of State Plan for Student Assessment



are required to report as part of their state's assessment plan: evidence of a student assessment plan; measurement of state-mandated student performance indicators; measurement of institutionally-developed student performance indicators; and evidence of having used student assessment information. Institutions checked all applicable reporting requirements. Figure 3 presents these responses for public baccalaureate and all public institutions in our study.

Figure 3. State Reporting Requirements for Student Assessment*



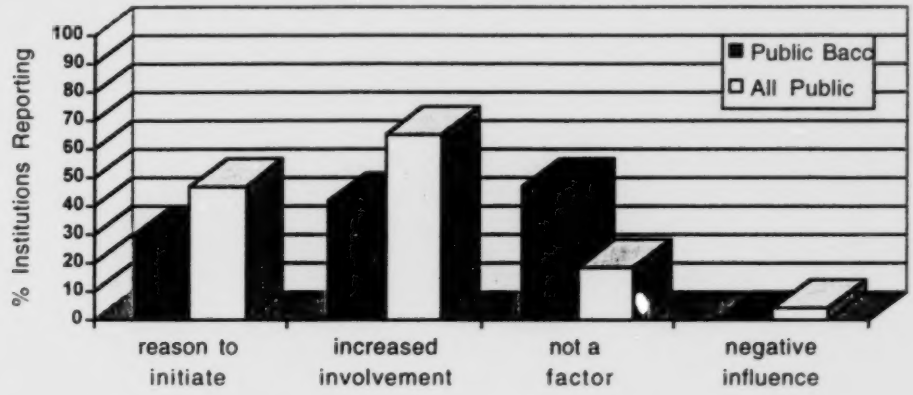
*Only institutions with a state plan for student assessment responded to this question.

The most common reporting requirements for baccalaureate institutions are evidence of a student assessment plan (88%) and evidence of institutional use of student assessment (74%). More than half of respondents say they must report on institutionally-devised student performance indicators (59%) and are required to provide evidence of having used student assessment information (56%). Compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions are more likely to report that they must comply with three of these four state requirements. The only requirement which appears to be less applicable is requiring measurement of state-mandated student performance indicators.

Influence of State Assessment Requirements

What influence have state assessment requirements had on institutions' undergraduate student assessment activities? Institutions were asked which of the following impacts on their student assessment activities they attribute to state assessment requirements: were an important reason for institution initiating undergraduate student assessment; increased institution's involvement in undergraduate student assessment; were not a factor in institution's undergraduate student assessment activities; or were a negative influence on institution's undergraduate student assessment activities. Institutions selected all applicable influences. Responses from public baccalaureate and all public institutions are displayed in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Influence of State Requirements for Student Assessment on Institutions' Assessment Activities*



*Only institutions with a state plan for student assessment responded to this question

Among public baccalaureate institutions reporting a state plan, most report that their state's assessment plan has not been a factor in their involvement in student assessment (47%). However, a comparable percentage report that the state's plan has increased their involvement in student assessment (42%), and one-third report that the state plan was an important reason to initiate student assessment. No respondents report that their state's assessment mandate has a negative influence on their efforts. Compared to all public institutions, public baccalaureate institutions are more likely to report that their state's mandate has not affected involvement in student assessment efforts on their campus.

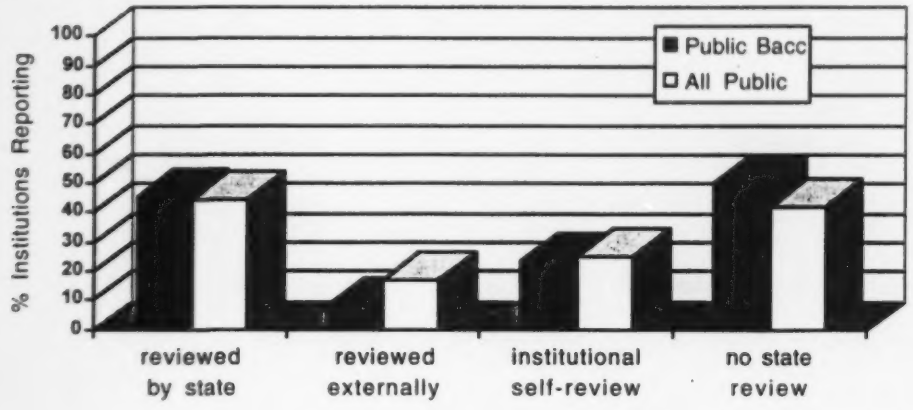
State Review of Institutions' Student Assessment Plans

Occurrence of State Review. States vary in terms of whether and how they evaluate institutions' student assessment plans or information (National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, 1996). The survey asked respondents whether state officials had reviewed or evaluated their institution's student assessment plans or processes. If a state review or evaluation had occurred, respondents indicated whether this review had been conducted by state officials, external reviewers, or the institution itself. Responses from public baccalaureate and all public institutions are presented in Figure 5.

Half of public baccalaureate institutions in states with mandated student assessment activities report that their student assessment plan or policy has been reviewed. The most common form of review is by the state itself (45%). Approximately one-quarter of baccalaureate institutions

report that they have been required to do a self-review and the least common method for reviewing the institution's student assessment policy or plan is by external reviewers (8%). Compared to all public institutions, public baccalaureate institutions are less likely to have had an external review of their assessment plan or process.

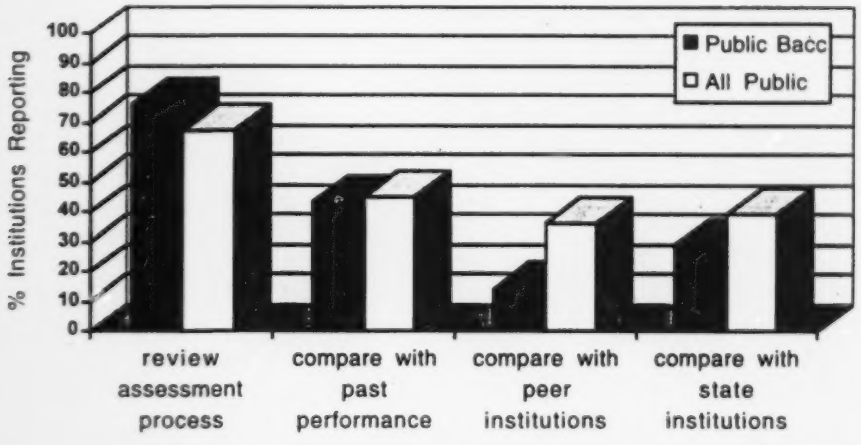
Figure 5. Methods Used to Review Institutions' Student Assessment Plans or Processes*



*Only institutions with a state plan for student assessment responded to this question

State Review Criteria. Institutions that have undergone a state review of their student assessment plan or process specified if the evaluation: reviewed the institution's student assessment process; compared the institution's student performance record to its past performance; compared the institution's student performance record with that of peer institutions; or compared the institution's student performance record with that of other institutions in the state. Responses from public baccalaureate and all public institutions are presented in Figure 6.

Figure 6. State Review Criteria for Institutions' Student Assessment Plans or Processes



For those baccalaureate institutions that had undergone a state-level review of their student assessment plan or process, most report that the state reviewed the institution's student assessment

process itself (76%). States also used comparisons in evaluating institutions' student assessment processes. Comparisons with an institution's own students' past performance is most common (43%), followed by comparisons with other institutions in the same state (29%), and comparisons to peer institutions (14%). Compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions are less likely to be compared with peers.

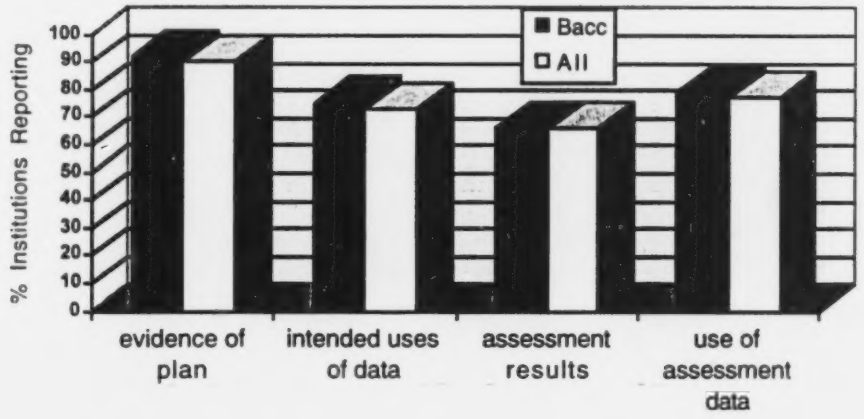
Regional Accrediting Role in Student Assessment

As noted earlier, regional accreditation agencies have been reported as important influences on institutions' decisions to begin or expand their student assessment activities (El-Khawas, 1990, 1992, 1995; Johnson et al., 1991). The majority of baccalaureate institutions participating in our study (81%) had completed a regional accreditation review requiring undergraduate student assessment. To further examine the role of regional accreditation associations in student assessment, the survey asked about the reporting requirements for regional accreditation and institutions' perceptions of the influence of regional accreditation requirements on their assessment efforts. In the following sections, we will present data on the role of the regional accreditation body in baccalaureate and all institutions in our study.

Regional Accreditation Reporting Requirements for Student Assessment

Regional accreditation associations vary in terms of the evidence they require institutions to report on student assessment efforts. It may be expected that requirements to report on the use being made of assessment information will contribute to greater institutional impacts from assessment than requirements that ask merely for evidence of an assessment plan or assessment data. We asked institutions which of the following types of information they were required to report to their regional accreditation association: evidence of a student assessment plan; intended institutional uses of student assessment information; results of student assessment; and evidence of having used student assessment information. Institutions checked all applicable reporting requirements. Very few (4%) of baccalaureate institutions were unfamiliar with their regional accreditation requirements for student assessment. Responses from baccalaureate and all institutions are displayed in Figure 7.

Figure 7. Regional Accreditation Association Reporting Requirements for Student Assessment



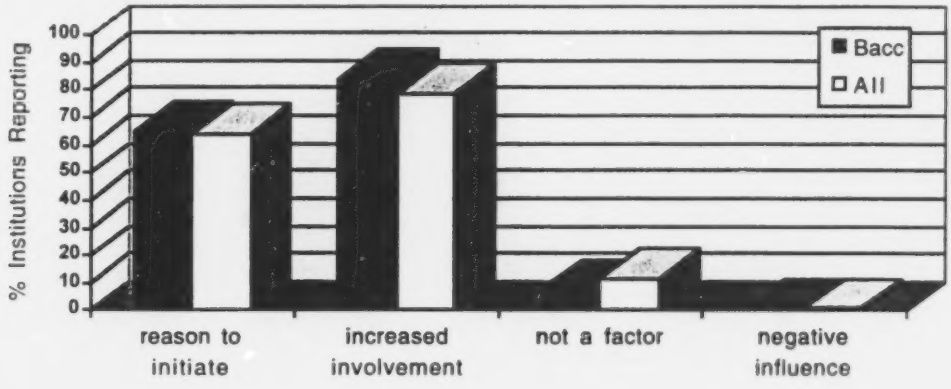
Most baccalaureate respondents report that they are required to submit all four of these criteria to their regional accreditation agency. In almost all cases, they are required to submit

evidence that they have a student assessment plan in place (92%). The requirement to submit evidence of actual institutional use of student assessment information (79%) is more common than the requirement to submit only intended institutional uses (75%). While more than half of baccalaureate institutions are required to submit the results of student assessment (66%), this requirement is least common among the four. There are no great differences between baccalaureate and all institutions on these reporting requirements.

Influence of Regional Accreditation Association Requirements for Student Assessment

What influence have regional accreditation association requirements had on institutions' undergraduate student assessment activities? Institutions were asked which of the following impacts on their student assessment activities they attributed to their regional accreditor's assessment requirements: were an important reason for initiating undergraduate student assessment; increased institution's involvement in undergraduate student assessment; were not a factor in institution's undergraduate student assessment activities; or were a negative influence on institution's undergraduate student assessment activities. Institutions selected all applicable influences. Responses from baccalaureate and all institutions are displayed in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Influence of Regional Accreditation Requirements for Student Assessment on Institutions' Assessment Activities



Most responding baccalaureate institutions report that regional accreditation requirements have increased their involvement with student assessment (84%). Many say that the requirements were an important reason to initiate a student assessment process (65%). Very few baccalaureate institutional respondents report that the regional accreditation requirements either are not a factor in (8%) or have a negative influence on (0.3%) their student assessment process. Regional accrediting associations may have a slightly greater effect on baccalaureate institutions than they do on all institutions.

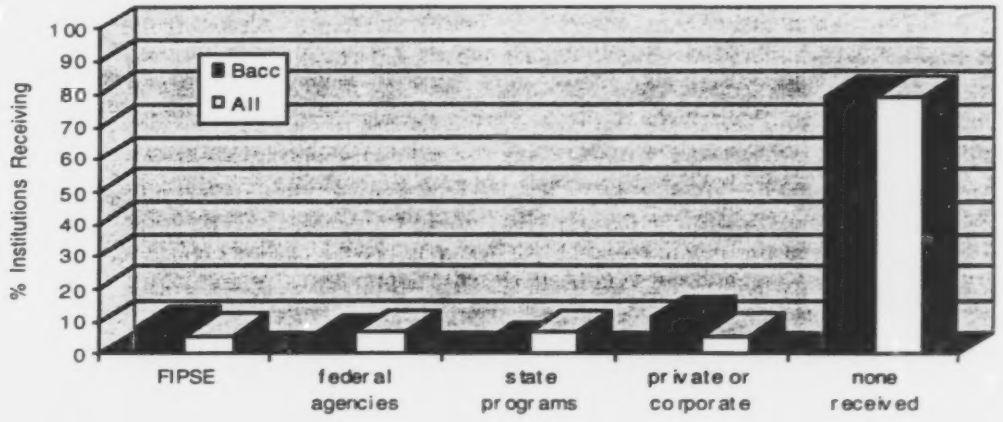
External Sources of Support for Student Assessment

External constituents may influence institutions' involvement in student assessment by providing funding or services to support assessment efforts. Little is known about the extent to which institutions have availed themselves of these external sources of support. Our survey asked institutions about their use of external grants and other services for improving their student assessment efforts.

Receipt of External Grants for Student Assessment

Institutions were asked if they had received grants to improve or support their student assessment practices from any of the following external sources: Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), other federal agencies, state incentive programs, and private foundations or corporate sources. Responses from baccalaureate and all institutions are presented in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Receipt of External Grants for Student Assessment by Source



Approximately one-fifth of responding baccalaureate institutions have received an external grant for student assessment. Of the grants that were awarded to baccalaureate institutions, most report receiving a private foundation or corporation grant (11%) followed by a FIPSE grant (8%), some type of federal grant other than FIPSE (5%), and state grants (3%). Compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions are more likely to receive private foundation or corporate grants to assess students.

Use of External Services to Support Student Assessment

A variety of postsecondary organizations — professional associations, regional accrediting associations, state-level agencies, and consortia of institutions — provide a range of services intended to support institutions' student assessment efforts. These services include consultation, assessment conferences, training workshops, and publications or research reports on student assessment. For each of these four types of postsecondary organizations, the survey asked institutions which, if any, of these student assessment services they had used. Responses from baccalaureate and all institutions in our study are presented in Table 1.

While many baccalaureate institutions report that external services are not used or not available, they do use assessment-related services from some types of postsecondary organizations more than others. They are more likely to use services from professional and regional accreditation associations than from state agencies or institutional consortia. They are also likely to use certain types of assessment support services more than others, regardless of service provider. Baccalaureate institutions make most frequent use of publications or research reports and conferences on student assessment. A smaller proportion has used training workshops from one or more providers while the smallest proportion has used consultation services. Compared to all institutions in our study, baccalaureate institutions are less likely to use state-provided services, especially state-sponsored conferences on student assessment.

Table 1. Institutional Use of External Services to Support Student Assessment by Service Provider

	% of Institutions Using									
	Services not used or not available		Consultation services		Assessment conferences		Training workshops		Publications or research reports	
External Service Provider	Bacc	All	Bacc	All	Bacc	All	Bacc	All	Bacc	All
Professional associations	30	29	11	13	52	51	30	32	50	51
Regional accrediting association	26	30	17	19	44	41	33	32	44	45
State-level agency	67	54	11	14	15	26	14	22	18	22
Consortium of institutions	48	53	17	13	36	30	19	18	27	20

Summary Observations

While both states and regional accrediting agencies have influenced baccalaureate institutions to engage in student assessment, accrediting associations are reported to have a greater influence than states in increasing involvement in student assessment. Even public baccalaureate institutions are likely to report 1) that the state is not a factor in their assessment activities; 2) that there has not been a state review of assessment activities; and 3) if there has been a review, it was not likely to include state-mandated indicators of student success as one of the criteria. Furthermore, baccalaureate institutions are not likely to use state-provided services to support student assessment. Compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions are less likely to be involved with their state on student assessment initiatives. In contrast to state influences, regional accreditation agencies are reported to have increased involvement in student assessment in baccalaureate institutions.

Somewhat surprising is the number of baccalaureate institutions that have undergone a review of their student assessment plan or process. A majority of institutions have gone through an accreditation review and half have experienced a state review of their assessment process. The student assessment movement has advanced to the point where almost every institution should have had its student assessment process reviewed by at least one external body. These review processes go beyond merely reviewing the existence of an assessment plan. For example, accreditation bodies seek evidence that student assessment information is used in decision making.

Despite the apparent influence of external bodies, institutions appear to be using their own resources to support their assessment activities. Baccalaureate institutions are not likely to be receiving external funding to support their student assessment endeavors. Perhaps funding agents believe that assessing students should be a function of the institutional budget, rather than a special grant-funded project.

4. APPROACHES TO STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Addresses the type or content of student assessment measures used by institutions, the timing of those assessments, their use of standardized instruments and less traditional student assessment methods, and types of assessment studies conducted and student performance reports produced. Compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions have more extensive and comprehensive approaches to student assessment. They tend to focus on collecting affective data and are most likely to collect data on students' basic college-readiness skills, their academic intentions, and their academic progress than on any other types of student skills or outcomes. Conversely, they are least likely to collect data on vocational skills, students' personal growth, and former students' civic or social roles.

Assessment approach decisions may be influenced by external mandates, institutional context, and domains of the organizational and administrative environment. An institution's assessment approach may shape the uses and impacts of assessment information. Assessment scholars contend that institutions that collect comprehensive student assessment information — those that collect data on various dimensions of student performance, at multiple points in time, through a variety of assessment methods — and that conduct and report a variety of analyses of assessment data are more likely to use and achieve positive impacts from student assessment data.

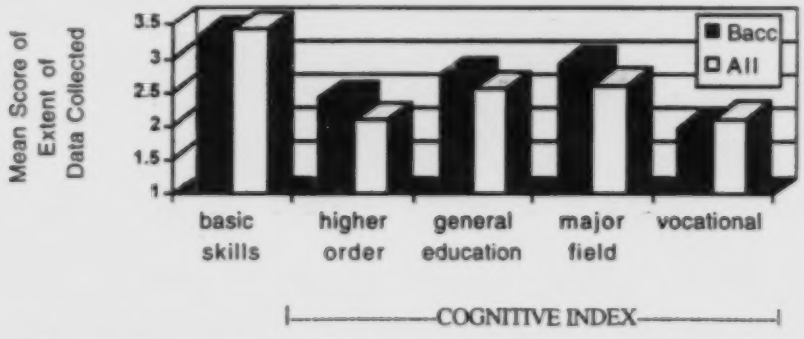
What approaches to student assessment have baccalaureate institutions adopted? The ISSA instrument addressed the type or content of student assessment measures used by institutions, the timing of those assessments, their use of standardized instruments and less traditional student assessment methods, and types of assessment studies conducted and student performance reports produced. Here we examine the profile of student assessment approaches in baccalaureate institutions and compare it to the profile for all types of postsecondary institutions.

Type and Extent of Student Data Collected

Data Collected on Current Students

What types of data do institutions collect from their students? Survey respondents reported the extent to which their institution collects ten types of student data for currently enrolled students and four measures for former students. Figures 10, 11, and 12 display mean scores for the extent to which baccalaureate institutions and all institutions collect these data.

Figure 10. Extent of Cognitive Data Collected on Current Students



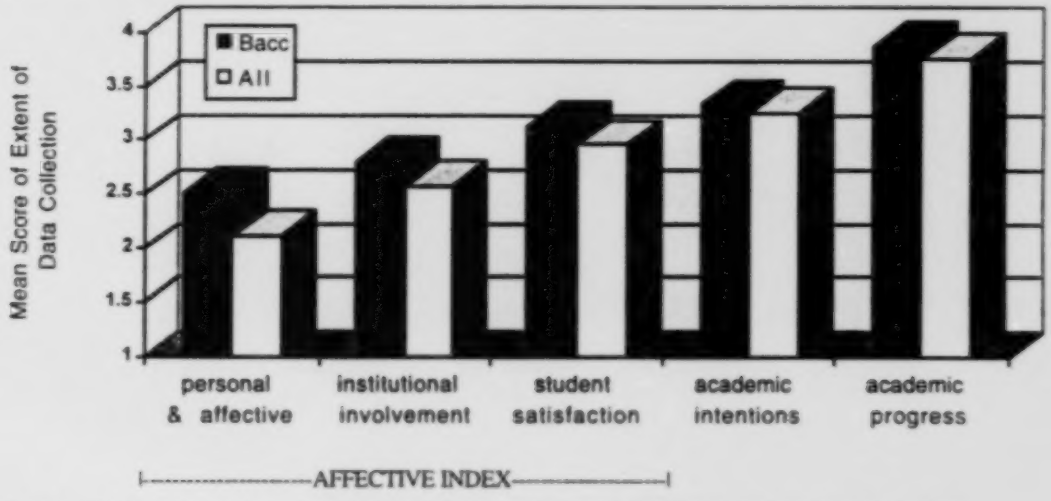
1=not collected; 2=collected for some students; 3=collected for many students; 4=collected for all students.

Cognitive Data. Figure 10 shows the extent to which institutions collect five types of cognitive student assessment data: basic college-readiness skills, higher-order skills (e.g., critical thinking and problem solving), general education competencies, competence in major field of study (discipline- or program-specific knowledge), and vocational or professional skills. The latter four of these five types of data factored together to create a "cognitive assessment" index that we used in regression analyses presented in section eight.

Baccalaureate institutions collect the most cognitive data on students' basic college-readiness skills (3.35), collecting these data for "many" students. Conversely, baccalaureate institutions tend to collect less data on vocational skills (1.97) and higher-order skills (2.41), collecting these data only on "some" students. Compared to all institutions in our study, baccalaureate institutions are more likely to collect data on higher-order skills, general education skills, and competence in the students' major. They are less likely to collect data on basic and vocational skills.

Affective and Behavioral Data. Figure 11 presents five types of affective and behavioral data collected on currently enrolled students: personal growth and affective development, student experiences and involvement with the institution, student satisfaction with the institution, students' academic intentions, and students' academic progress. The first three of these items factored together into an "affective assessment" index that we used in regression analyses presented in section eight.

Figure 11. Extent of Affective and Behavioral Data Collected on Current Students



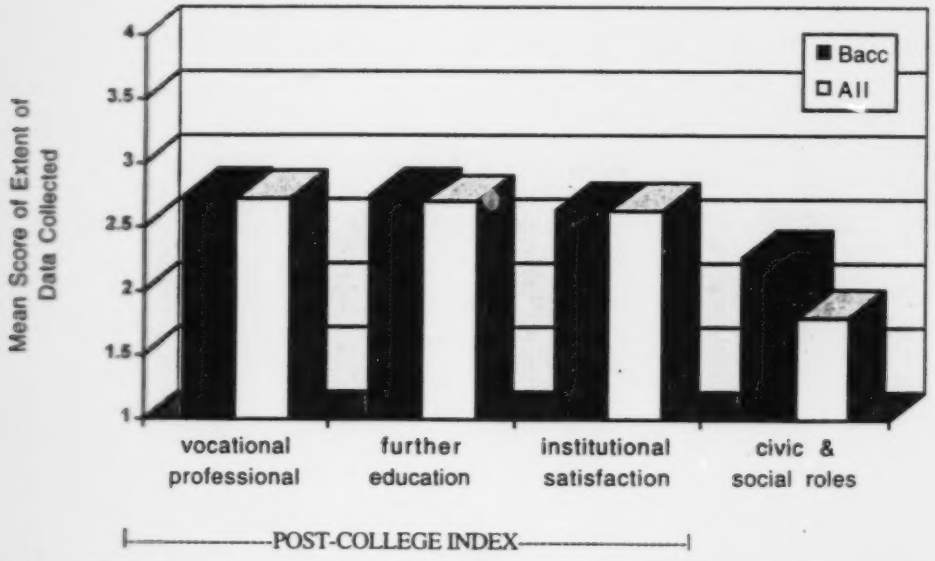
1=not collected; 2=collected for some students; 3=collected for many students; 4=collected for all students.

Baccalaureate institutions collect the most data on students' academic progress (3.87). Baccalaureate institutions measure students' academic progress more frequently than they measure students' academic intentions. One would think that it is necessary to first discern students' academic intentions before evaluating their progress. Nonetheless, it is probably easier to monitor academic progress via transcripts and other institutional data than it is to collect and update information on students' goals. Baccalaureate institutions are least likely to collect data on students' personal and affective growth (2.51). However, compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions are more likely to collect data on students in all five of these affective and behavioral areas.

Data Collected on Former Students

Figure 12 displays mean scores for the extent to which baccalaureate and all institutions collect four types of data from former students: civic or social roles (e.g., political, social or community involvement), satisfaction and experiences with the institution after leaving, further education (e.g., transfer, degree attainment, graduate study), and vocational or professional outcomes (e.g., job attainment or performance). These latter three items factored together to create a "post-college" assessment index that we used in regression analyses in section eight.

Figure 12. The Extent of Data Collected on Former Students



1=not collected; 2=collected for some students; 3=collected for many students; 4=collected for all students.

Baccalaureate institutions collect data on "some" to "many" students on vocational outcomes (2.74), further education (2.74), and their satisfaction (2.63). They are slightly less likely to collect data on students' post-college civic or social roles (2.26). Compared to all institutions in our study, baccalaureate institutions are just as likely to collect post-college data in general, and much more likely to collect data on former students' civic and social roles. Baccalaureate institutions often stress that they prepare students for citizenship and social responsibility, thus it is fitting that they would report to us that they are measuring these qualities in their former students.

Timing of Data Collection

Researchers have stressed that it is particularly important for institutions to collect student assessment data at varying points in time, in order to assure that students are meeting their academic goals and that the college experience is "value-added." When are baccalaureate institutions collecting student assessment data? Table 2 presents the timing of the student assessment data collection efforts for each of nine measures of student performance for baccalaureate and all institutions. Institutional respondents told us whether they collect such data at entry, during student enrollment, and/or at exit. Respondents could choose all three of these options.

Table 2. Institutions Collecting Cognitive, Behavioral and Affective Student Assessment Data at Entry, While Student is Enrolled and at Exit

	% Institutions Collecting Data					
	At Entry		While Enrolled		At Exit	
Data Collected	Bacc	All	Bacc	All	Bacc	All
Cognitive Data						
Basic Skills	94	97	25	21	10	8
Higher Order Skills	41	32	64	66	34	33
General Education	37	32	68	64	36	36
Major Competence	8	9	58	62	68	64
Vocational Skills	9	10	72	67	49	60
Affective and Behavioral Data						
Personal Growth	44	32	59	67	48	41
Student Involvement	10	7	71	72	58	55
Student Satisfaction	9	7	70	71	67	65
Academic Intentions	93	92	37	36	28	19

Timing of Collecting Cognitive Data

With the exception of basic skills data, most cognitive data are collected either while the student is enrolled or at exit. It is not surprising that most baccalaureate institutions which collect basic skills data do so at the point of entry into the institution (94%). However, only one-quarter of these institutions report that basic skills are assessed while the student is enrolled. More than half of those baccalaureate institutions that collect data on a student's competence in the major do so while the student is enrolled (58%) and again at exit (68%). While this finding seems to indicate that students are assessed at more than one point in time, in actuality, only 27% of baccalaureate institutions are collecting major competence data on students *both* while enrolled *and* at exit—the remaining institutions are collecting major competence data *either* while enrolled *or* at exit. Compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions are less likely to collection vocational data on students at exit—these institutions probably have fewer vocationally-oriented programs.

Timing of Collecting Affective and Behavioral Data

With the exception of academic intentions, most affective data are collected either during enrollment or at exit. In terms of academic intentions, it again is not surprising that students' intentions are collected at entry (93% collect these data at entry). It seems apparent that these intentions are not assessed again, even though students' goals may change throughout their time at an institution. Compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions are more likely to collect data on students' personal growth at entry as a baseline for further growth.

Student Assessment Instruments and Methods Used

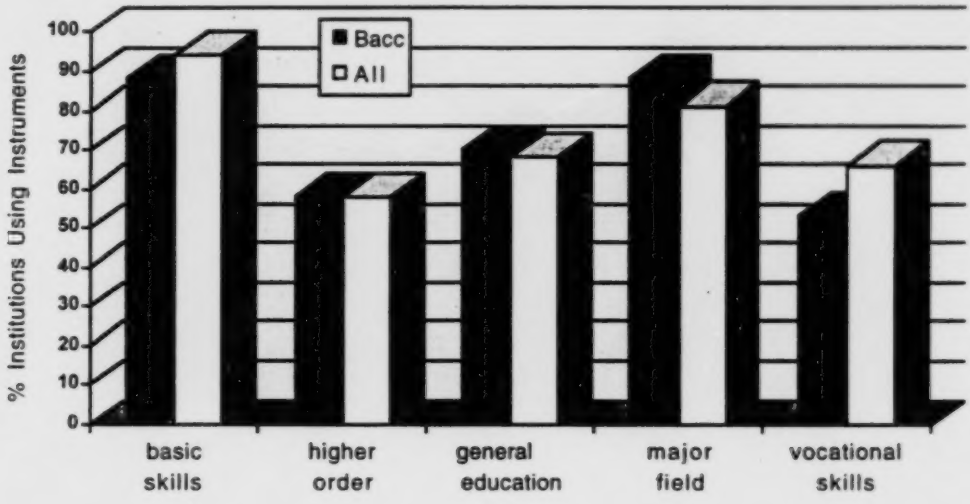
Institutions engaging in student assessment efforts must select the means by which assessment data will be collected. A traditional choice is to use assessment instruments, generally in the form of objective examinations or inventories administered in a pencil and paper or computerized format. More recently, there has been growing interest in alternative methods of assessing students. These non-traditional methods tend to be more qualitative or integrative in approach — requiring students to demonstrate higher-order cognitive skills such as application or synthesis — or may use sources of information other than students themselves. Further, as the student body entering postsecondary institutions becomes more diverse through the increased enrollment of part-time, older, and minority students, some scholars have suggested the need to

use special assessment methods to reflect the unique characteristics, learning styles, needs, and life situations of various sub-populations of students.

Student Assessment Instruments

How are institutions collecting student assessment data? Survey respondents reported whether their institution uses instruments or tests to collect any of ten types of assessment information: nine for current students (basic college-readiness skills; higher-order skills; general education competencies; competence in major field of study; vocational or professional skills; academic intentions, personal growth and affective development, experiences and involvement with the institution; and satisfaction with the institution) and one for former students (alumni satisfaction and experiences). If an instrument is used, respondents specified its source — institutionally-developed, state-provided, or commercially available. Figures 13 and 14 present information on these ten types of assessment information collected via traditional instruments or tests by baccalaureate and all institutions in our study.

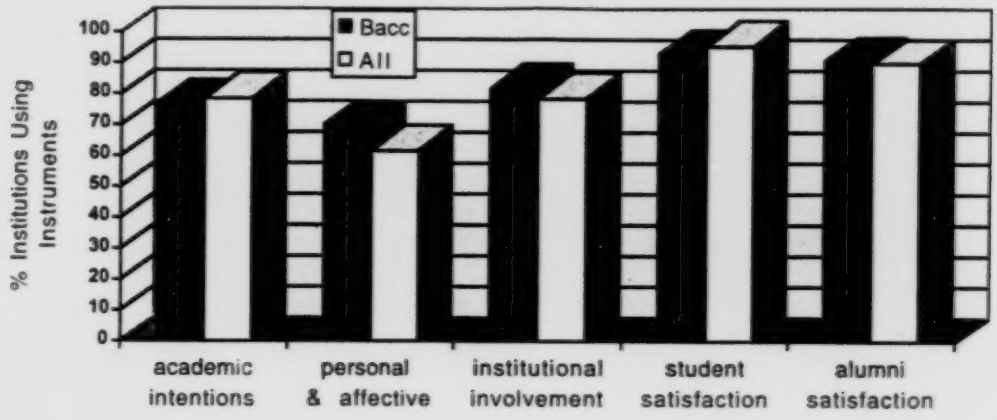
Figure 13. Institutional Use of Student Assessment Instruments to Collect Cognitive Data



As Figures 13 demonstrates, the use of assessment instruments or tests varies with the type of assessment data collected. In terms of cognitive data, baccalaureate institutions are most likely to use instruments or inventories to collect data on basic college-readiness skills and competencies in the major field (both 88%). These institutions are least likely to use instruments or inventories to collect data on students' higher-order cognitive (58%) and vocational (53%) skills. Compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions are less likely to use instruments to measure students' basic college-readiness and vocational skills, but are more likely to measure students' competencies in the major using instruments or tests.

Figure 14 demonstrates that in terms of affective and behavioral data, baccalaureate institutions are most likely to use instruments or inventories to collect data on current student (93%) and alumni (91%) satisfaction. They are less likely to use instruments or inventories to collect data on students' personal and affective growth (70%). Compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions are more likely to use instruments or tests to measure students' personal or affective growth.

Figure 14. Institutional Use of Student Assessment Instruments to Collect Affective and Behavioral Data



Other Student Assessment Methods

Institutions also reported the extent to which they use each of nine alternative methods of student assessment. Table 3 presents this information for baccalaureate and all institutions. Four of these options require more active participation of currently enrolled students and factored together to create a "student-centered" assessment index that we used in regression analyses presented in section eight: student performance in capstone courses, observations of student performance, student portfolios or comprehensive projects, and student interviews or focus groups. Baccalaureate institutions are most likely to use student performance in capstone courses (2.50). The other three student-centered methods are used by baccalaureate institutions only in some units. The least often used of these three methods is interviews or focus groups with students (1.96). Compared to all institutions in our study, baccalaureate institutions are more likely to use all four of the student-centered methods for collecting assessment data.

Table 3. Mean Scores of Extent of Use of Other Student Assessment Methods

Student Assessment Methods	Baccalaureates (n=315)	All Institutions (n=1393)
Student-Centered		
Student performance in capstone courses	2.50	2.15
Observations of student performance	2.34	2.26
Student portfolios or comprehensive projects	2.29	2.10
Student interviews or focus groups	1.96	1.84
Externally Oriented		
Alumni interviews or focus groups	1.95	1.90
Employer interviews or focus groups	1.66	1.87
Other Methods		
Surveys or interviews with withdrawing students	2.78	2.40
Transcript analysis	2.24	2.16
External examination of students	1.98	2.02

1 = not used; 2 = used in some units; 3 = used in most units; 4 = used in all units

Two of the other alternative measures rely on information from external groups or sources and factored together to create an index of "external methods" of assessment that we used in regression analyses presented in section eight: alumni interviews or focus groups and employer interviews or focus groups. Baccalaureate institutions are more likely to interview or hold focus groups with alumni (1.95) than with employers (1.66). Compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions are more likely to interview alumni and less likely to interview employers.

There were three additional alternative student assessment measures listed in our survey: surveying or interviewing withdrawing students, transcript analysis, and using external examinations. Of these three, baccalaureate institutions are most likely to survey/interview withdrawing students (2.78). They are least likely to use external examiners or examinations of students and their use of transcript analysis falls in the middle of these two. Baccalaureate institutions are more likely to survey or interview withdrawing students and to use transcript analysis than are all institutions.

Assessment Methods for Student Sub-Populations

Do institutions use different assessment methods for specific sub-populations of their student body? Table 4 presents the percentage of baccalaureate and all institutions using different assessment methods for four student sub-populations: adult students, part-time students, minority students, and distance education students.

Table 4. Institutional Use of Different Assessment Methods for Different Student Sub-Populations

	% Institutions Using Different Assessment Methods	
Student Sub-Population	Baccalaureate (n=306)	All Institutions (n=1366)
Adult students	17	10
Part-time students	7	5
Minority students	1	2
Distance education students	22	22

Most baccalaureate institutions do not use different assessment methods for specific sub-populations of undergraduate students. However, 22% report using different methods for distance education students, a decision that may be necessitated by the type of medium used for course delivery. In addition, 17% report using different methods to assess adult students. Very few use special methods for collecting assessment data from their part-time (7%) or minority (1%) students. Compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions are more likely to use different assessment measures for adult students. Perhaps adult students are more of an anomaly on these campuses, thus making it easier to separate these students from the rest and use special assessment techniques for them.

Student Assessment Studies and Reports

Beyond collecting descriptive data on their students' characteristics, performance, or development, institutions must consider how to transform these data into useful information. Institutions that study the relationship between various aspects of students' institutional experiences and their performance will be better able to make informed decisions concerning academic and student-related policies and practices. Another consideration is the level of aggregation at which assessment information is analyzed and reported.

Student Assessment Studies

Are institutions studying how student performance is connected to experiences with the institution? In our survey, we asked if institutions conduct studies of the relationship between nine areas of students' institutional experiences and students' performance. Table 5 identifies these areas and presents data on institutional studies for both baccalaureate and all institutions in our study.

Table 5. Institutions Conducting Student Assessment Studies

Studies of Relationship Between Student Performance and the Following Experiences	% Institutions Conducting Studies	
	Baccalaureates (n=304)	All Institutions (n=1329)
Do not study these experiences	34	38
Admission standards or policies	50	42
Extra-curricular activities	30	24
Student financial aid and/or concurrent employment	27	30
Academic advising patterns	27	26
Residence arrangements	27	21
Student course-taking patterns	23	26
Classroom, library and/or computing resources	17	17
Exposure to different instructional or teaching methods	16	21
Patterns of student-faculty interaction	16	14

One-third of baccalaureate institutional respondents (34%) report that they do not conduct any of these studies on students' experiences. For those that do conduct studies, they are most likely to study relationships with admissions standards or policies (50%). They are least likely to conduct studies on classroom, library and/or computing resources (17%), exposure to different instructional or teaching methods (16%), and patterns of student-faculty interaction (16%).

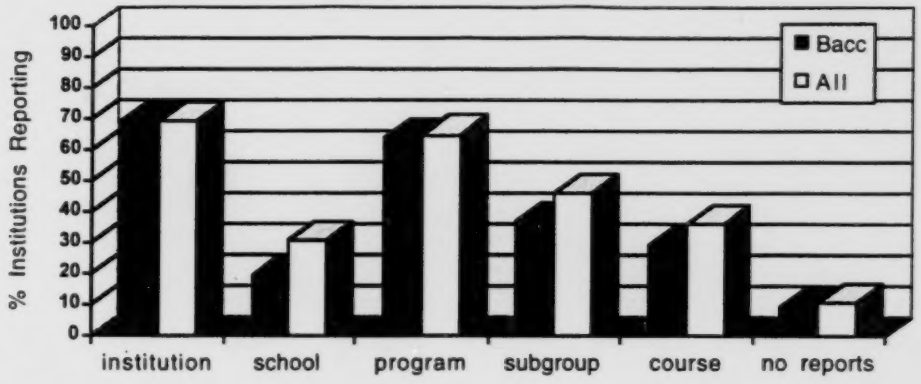
Compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions are more likely to study relationships between student performance and both extra-curricular activities and the institutional admissions standards or policies. Baccalaureate institutions often offer a plethora of extra-curricular activities as part of their mission for holistic postsecondary education. In addition, since baccalaureate institutions vary in terms of selectivity, studies of admissions standards may be especially relevant to these institutions.

Student Assessment Reports

Finally, institutions were asked to report the levels of aggregation at which they provide reports of student assessment information. Figure 15 shows the percentage of baccalaureate and all institutions providing student assessment reports at five levels of aggregation: institution-wide; school or college; program; special populations of students; course or groups of courses. Respondents indicated as many levels of aggregation as were applicable or could indicate that they provide no reports of student assessment information.

Most baccalaureate respondents prepare some reports on student assessment results (91%). The most prevalent level of aggregation used is institution-wide (69%), followed closely by academic program/department (64%). The least prevalent level of aggregation for baccalaureate institutions is by school or college (19%). Compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions are less likely to provide student assessment data at the school or college level, likely because these institutions are not typically organized into discrete schools or colleges. Baccalaureate institutions are also less likely to provide reports either by subgroups of students or by course.

Figure 15. Preparation of Student Performance Reports by Level of Aggregation



Summary Observations

Compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions appear to be taking the lead in terms of their approach to student assessment. They tend to focus on collecting affective data and are most likely to collect data on students' basic college-readiness skills, their academic intentions, and their academic progress than on any other types of student skills or outcomes. Conversely, they are least likely to collect data on vocational skills, students' personal growth, and former students' civic or social roles. Compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions are more likely to use extensive methods for collecting data, including a greater emphasis on student-centered methods. Finally, two-thirds of all responding baccalaureate institutions said they conduct studies on students linking their performance to their interaction with the institution, and a great majority of respondents provide reports on the results of student assessment initiatives.

5. ORGANIZATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT PATTERNS

Focuses on the patterns of organizational and administrative support that institutions have developed to promote student assessment on their campuses, such as their mission and purpose, institution-wide activities, leadership support, and planning and coordinating mechanisms. Baccalaureate institutions' patterns reflect strong institution-wide support for student assessment and extensive faculty involvement.

An important focus of our study was to examine the patterns of organizational and administrative support institutions have developed to promote student assessment on their campuses. The assessment literature suggests that institutions will be most likely to promote internal support for assessment if they engage in assessment for internal rather than external purposes, have visible and strong leadership support for assessment, include a broad range of internal participants — particularly faculty — in making assessment-related decisions, and regularly evaluate their assessment programs. It is expected that organizational and administrative support will shape the assessment approach, assessment management practices and policies, and ultimately, the institutional uses and impacts of assessment information.

The ISSA instrument included questions concerning the institution-wide assessment support strategy; administrative and governance activities used to promote student assessment; leadership and faculty support for assessment; planning and coordination for assessment; and evaluation of student assessment processes. Once again, we will present information concerning the pattern of organizational and administrative support for student assessment in baccalaureate institutions and compare it to the pattern for all types of postsecondary institutions.

Institution-Wide Assessment Support Strategy

Mission Emphasis

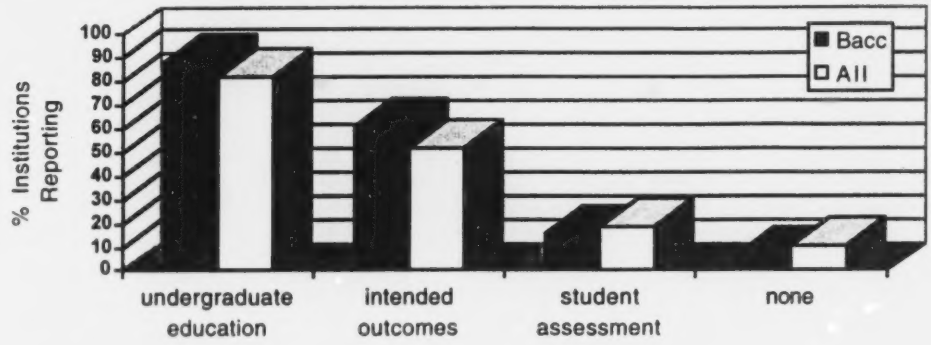
Assessment scholars and practitioners suggest that institutions' academic mission content may symbolize the importance with which student assessment is regarded and so may influence the degree of internal support for assessment. What do the mission statements of our responding institutions tell us about their values regarding student assessment? Institutions reported whether their mission statement explicitly: a) emphasizes excellence in undergraduate education, b) identifies intended student outcomes, c) refers to student assessment as an important priority, or d) does not mention any of these. Respondents could choose all applicable responses. Figure 16 displays the percentage of baccalaureate and all institutions reporting each of these mission statement components.

Although few baccalaureate institutions refer to student assessment as an important activity in their mission statement (16%), most baccalaureate institutions emphasize excellence in undergraduate education in their mission statements (88%) and many identify intended student outcomes (61%). Compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions are more likely to emphasize excellence in undergraduate education and specify intended student outcomes in their mission statements. They are less likely to specifically refer to the importance of student assessment.

Purposes for Engaging in Student Assessment

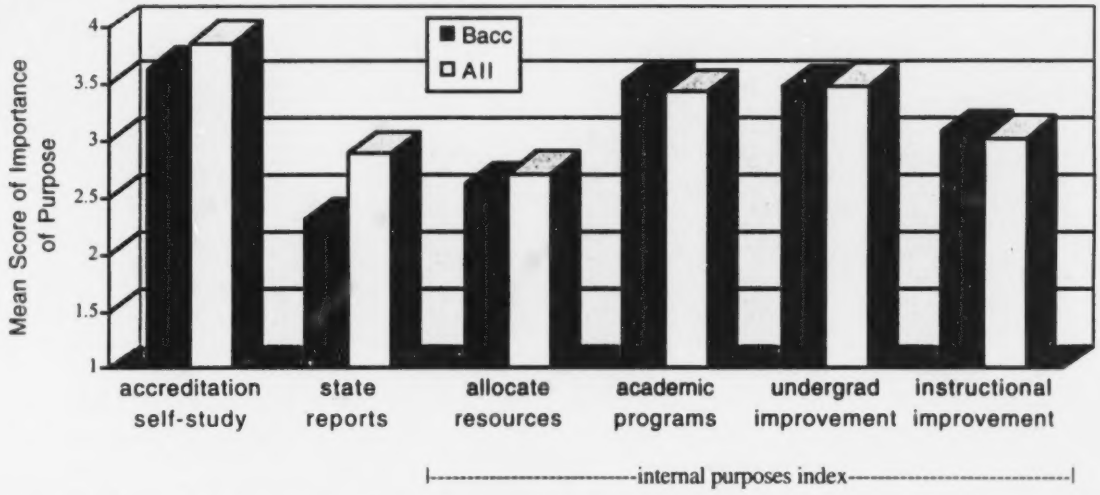
Why are institutions engaging in student assessment? A second dimension of institution-wide assessment support strategy examined in this study is the purpose(s) underlying institutions' student assessment efforts. Scholars contend that whether assessment is primarily engaged in for

Figure 16. Institutional Mission Emphasis



internal or for external purposes may influence the nature of an institution's assessment approach, degree of internal support, and assessment uses and impacts. Institutions rated the importance of six purposes for engaging in student assessment: preparing for an institutional accreditation self-study; meeting state reporting requirements; guiding internal resource allocation decisions; guiding undergraduate academic program improvement; improving the achievement of undergraduate students; and improving faculty instructional performance. The last four of these purposes were factored in an index of internal purposes for student assessment that we used in regression analyses presented in section eight. Figure 17 presents the mean scores for each student assessment purpose for baccalaureate and all institutions on this question.

Figure 17. Purposes of Student Assessment



1=no importance; 2=minor importance; 3=moderate importance; 4=very important

Baccalaureate institutions report that preparing a self-study for accreditation is the most important reason to engage in student assessment (3.63), followed by guiding undergraduate academic program improvement (3.51), improving the achievement of undergraduate students (3.47), and improving faculty instructional performance (3.08). All are rated "moderate" to "very"

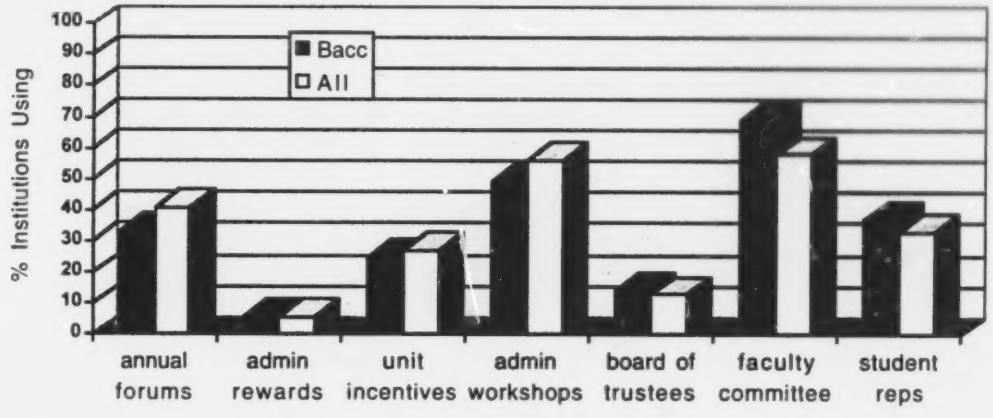
important. They are less likely to say that improving meeting state reporting requirements (2.30) or guiding internal resource allocation decisions (2.62) are important reasons for engaging in student assessment.

Compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions are less likely to report that meeting state requirements is an important reason to engage in student assessment. A greater percentage of baccalaureate institutions are private—likely explaining this difference. A smaller percentage of baccalaureate institutions are also likely to say that preparing for a self-study is an important reason to engage in student assessment.

Institution-Wide Administrative and Governance Activities

Institutions may develop a variety of administrative activities and governance structures to promote student assessment on an institution-wide basis. How prevalent are these practices? The ISSA instrument asked whether institutions use any of the following administrative activities and governance structures: annual institution-wide initiatives on assessment; rewards or incentives for academic and student affairs administrators to use student assessment in their units; incentives for academic units to use assessment information in evaluation and improvement efforts; student assessment workshops for academic and student affairs administrators; board of trustees committee that addresses student assessment; faculty governance committee that addresses student assessment issues; and student representation on student assessment committees. Figure 18 displays the percentage of baccalaureate and all institutions that have introduced these activities or structures in their institutions.

Figure 18. Institution-Wide Administrative and Governance Activities Used to Promote Student Assessment



Most of these seven activities are used sparingly by baccalaureate institutions. They are most likely have a faculty governance committee that addresses assessment issues (69%) and to provide assessment workshops for academic and student affairs administrators (49%). They are least likely to provide rewards or incentives for academic and student affairs administrators who promote units' use of assessment (6%) or to have a board of trustees committee that addresses assessment (14%).

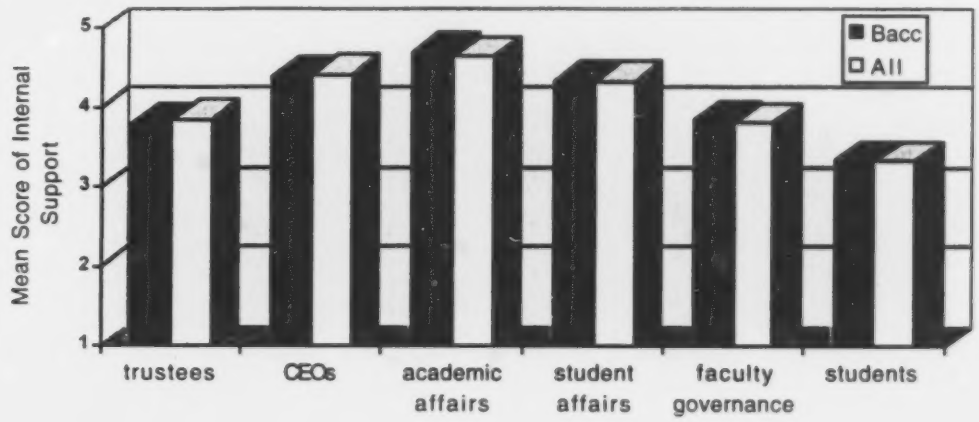
Compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions are more likely to have a faculty governance committee that addresses assessment issues. Perhaps faculty at these institutions are more likely to discuss teaching and learning issues in group settings. Baccalaureate institutions are

less likely to either hold annual institution-wide student assessment forums or to provide assessment workshops for academic and student affairs administrators.

Leadership and Faculty Support for Student Assessment

The degree to which student assessment efforts are supported internally is likely an important determinant of the extent and impact of an institution's student assessment activities. How supportive of student assessment are various internal constituencies? We asked survey respondents to rate the degree to which six internal groups support undergraduate student assessment activities: board of trustees; chief executive officer; academic affairs administrators; student affairs administrators; faculty governance; and students. Figure 19 presents the mean responses to this question for baccalaureate and all institutions in our study.

Figure 19. Internal Constituent Support for Student Assessment



1=very unsupportive; 2=somewhat unsupportive; 3=neutral, unknown; 4=somewhat supportive; 5=very supportive

Baccalaureate respondents report that academic affairs administrators are most supportive (4.69), followed by the chief executive officer (4.39) and student affairs administrators (4.33). Students are perceived as being the least supportive (3.40). The patterns of support within baccalaureate institutions are quite similar to the patterns of support for all institutions.

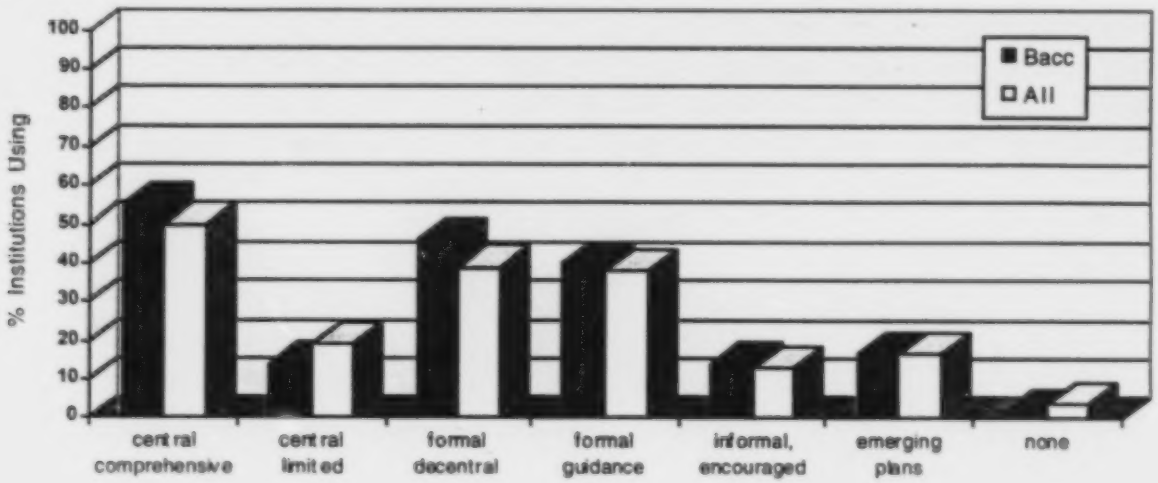
Planning and Coordinating Student Assessment

A central issue in discussions of leadership and governance for student assessment concerns the degree to which responsibility for planning and coordinating student assessment activities is centralized or decentralized within institutions. Centralized approaches that focus such responsibility on senior administrators or central offices may signal that assessment is a valued institutional activity, but decentralized approaches involving an array of internal participants may do more to promote broader internal support for assessment. How do institutions plan and coordinate their assessment efforts? We asked institutional respondents about six aspects of their assessment planning and coordination process: the nature of an institutional plan or policy for student assessment; membership on an institution-wide planning group for assessment; executive responsibility for the assessment planning process; approval authority for assessment plans; operational responsibility for student assessment; and reporting patterns.

Institutional Plan or Policy for Student Assessment

We asked survey respondents which of seven types of institutional plans or policies for student assessment best describes what exists at their institution: 1) formal comprehensive centralization — a formally adopted plan or policy specifying undergraduate student assessment activities for all academic programs or units; 2) formal limited centralization — a formally adopted plan or policy for undergraduate student assessment in some academic programs or units; 3) formal decentralization — a formally adopted institutional plan or policy requiring all academic units or programs to develop their own undergraduate student assessment plan; 4) formal guidance — a formally adopted institutional plan or policy identifying institution-wide activities to be conducted by a central committee or office; 5) informal encouragement — no institutional plan or policy but academic units or programs are encouraged to develop their own undergraduate student assessment activities; 6) emergent — institution is currently developing a plan or policy for undergraduate student assessment; and 7) none — institution does not have an undergraduate student assessment plan or policy. Respondents could select more than one type of plan or policy. Figure 20 presents the percentage of baccalaureate and all institutions using each type of assessment plan or policy.

Figure 20. Types of Institutional Plan or Policy for Student Assessment



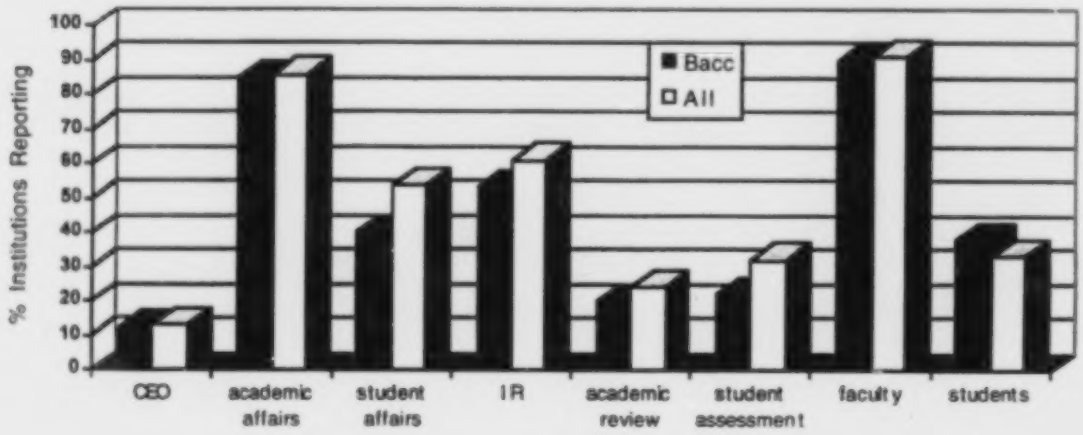
Virtually all baccalaureate institutions report that they have a plan or policy for student assessment; only 2% have no policy or plan. Baccalaureate institutions are most likely to report that they have a formal centralized student assessment policy (55%), followed by a formal decentralized policy (46%), and a formal guidance plan (40%). They are less likely to have any of the other types of plans or policies. Compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions are just as or more likely to have all types of these plan or policy approaches, except for the formal limited centralization policy. One could interpret from this finding that all academic units in baccalaureate institutions are treated fairly equally—either all are subjected to an assessment policy or none are.

Institution-Wide Assessment Planning Group Membership

Who is involved in student assessment planning? We asked respondents whether they have an institution-wide group responsible for ongoing planning and policy setting for undergraduate assessment. Fully 73% of baccalaureate institutions and 70% of all institutions report having such a group. Of those institutions with institution-wide planning groups, we asked

which of the following internal constituents serves on the group: chief executive officer, academic affairs administrator or staff, student affairs administrator or staff, institutional research administrator or staff, academic review and evaluation administrator or staff, student assessment administrator or staff, faculty, and students. Respondents checked as many constituents as were applicable. Figure 21 presents the percentage of baccalaureate and all institutions that responded that each constituent is a member of their assessment planning group.

Figure 21. Membership on Institution-Wide Student Assessment Planning Group*



*Only institutions with an institution-wide planning group for student assessment responded to this question

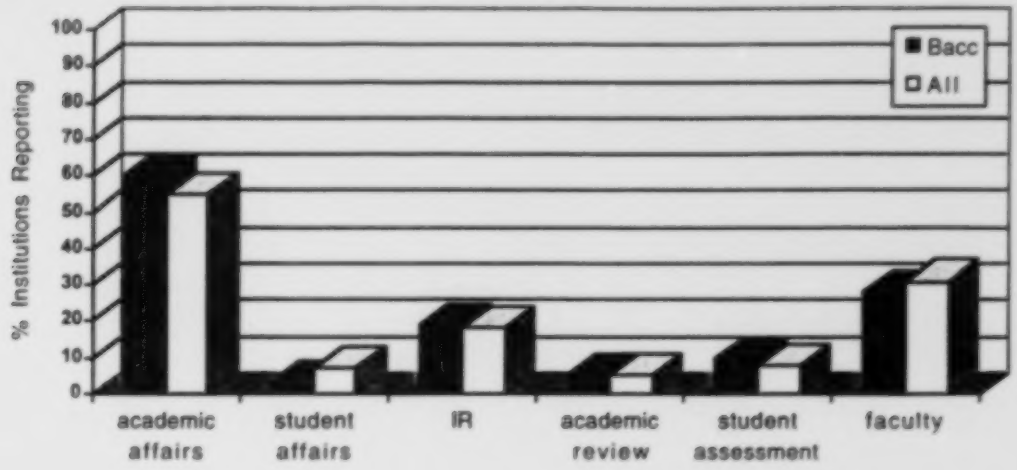
For baccalaureate institutions with a planning group, student assessment planning committees are staffed mainly by faculty (in 90% of the institutions) and academic administrators (85%). They are least likely to have the chief executive officer (12%), academic review or evaluation staff (20%), or student assessment staff (22%) involved. Compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions are less likely to have all the listed constituents serving on their planning group, except for students.

Executive Responsibility for Assessment Planning Process

Another measure of the governance process used for student assessment concerns where formal leadership for assessment planning is vested in an institution. We asked institutions which of the following positions has executive responsibility for or chaire the institution-wide group for student assessment planning: academic affairs administrator; student affairs administrator; institutional research officer; academic review and evaluation officer; student assessment officer; or faculty member. Figure 22 presents this information for baccalaureate and all institutions.

At most baccalaureate institutions, academic administrators chair the student assessment planning group (60%), followed by a faculty member at 28% of baccalaureate institutions. Less than 20% of the institutions have an institutional research officer or a student assessment administrator chair the student assessment planning group. It is very rare for either academic review (5%) or student affairs (3%) administrators to chair the student assessment planning group at baccalaureate institutions. The pattern is similar for all institutions. Baccalaureate institutions are slightly more likely than are all institutions to appoint an academic affairs administrator to chair the student assessment planning group.

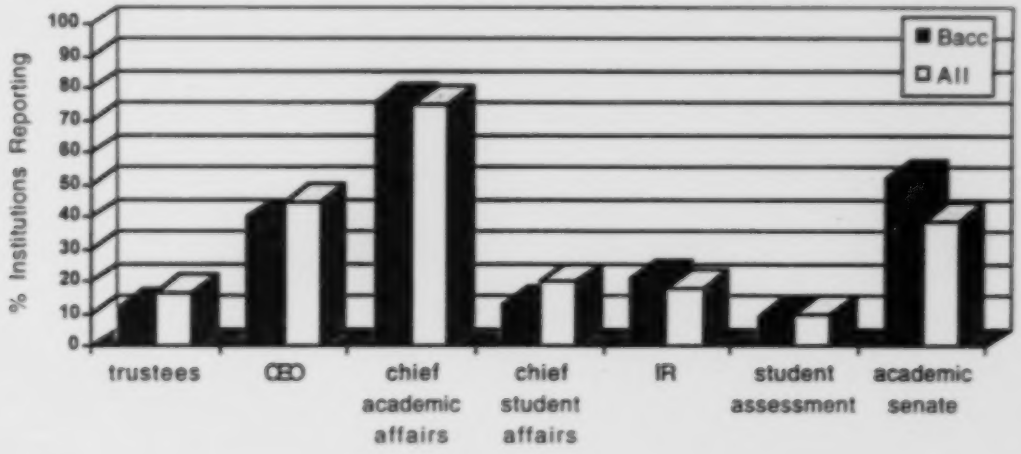
Figure 22. Executive Responsibility for Student Assessment Planning Group



Approval Authority for Student Assessment Plan

We asked institutions to identify who, among ten possible positions or groups, approves changes in their institutional plan or policy for student assessment: board of trustees; chief executive officer; chief academic affairs officer; chief student affairs officer; institutional research officer; academic review and evaluation officer; student assessment officer; student government; academic senate or other faculty committee; and faculty union. All respondents could answer this question regardless of whether or not they had an institution-wide committee for assessment planning. Respondents indicated as many positions or groups as were applicable. Only 15% of baccalaureate institutions report that academic review and evaluation officers, student government, or faculty union personnel have approval authority for the institutional assessment plan or policy. Figure 23 presents the results for seven positions for baccalaureate and all institutions.

Figure 23. Approval Authority for Student Assessment Plan or Policy

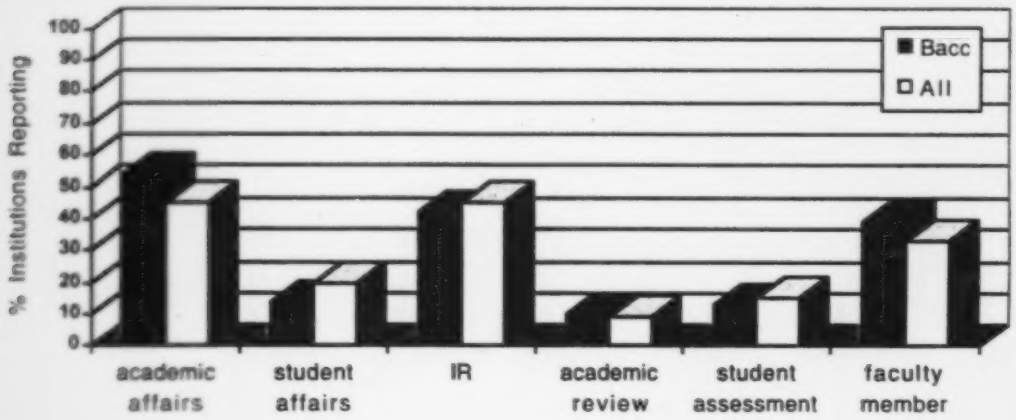


Over 70% of baccalaureate institutions report that the chief academic officer has approval authority for student assessment. An academic senate has such authority in approximately half the institutions and the chief executive officer has such authority in 40% of responding institutions. Baccalaureate institutions are not likely to invest approval authority in a student assessment officer (9%), the board of trustees (12%), a chief student affairs officer (13%), or an institutional researcher (21%). Compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions are more likely to invest an academic senate with approval authority. Boards at baccalaureate institutions may be more involved with teaching and learning issues than are boards at four year institutions. Conversely, baccalaureate institutions are less likely to invest the chief academic officer or the academic senate with student assessment approval authority. They are less likely to invest the board of trustees, the chief executive officer or the chief student affairs officer with student assessment approval authority.

Operational Responsibility for Day-to-Day Student Assessment Activities

Beyond the planning phase of student assessment, institutions must decide where to place responsibility for overseeing the day-to-day undergraduate student assessment activities such as instrument development, data collection, analysis, and reporting. Where have institutions placed operational responsibility for student assessment? We asked institutions which of six positions or offices has responsibility for day-to-day student assessment activities: academic affairs administrator; student affairs administrator; institutional research officer; academic review and evaluation officer; student assessment officer; and faculty member(s). Institutions checked as many positions/offices as applied. Figure 24 presents the results for baccalaureate and all institutions.

Figure 24. Operating Responsibility for Day-to-Day Student Assessment Activities

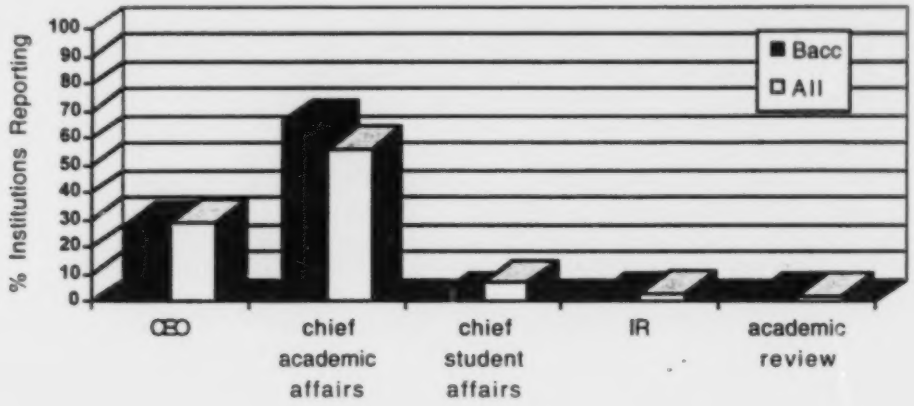


At baccalaureate institutions, an academic affairs administrator (54%), an institutional research officer (42%), or a faculty member (27%) is most likely to be responsible for day-to-day operational responsibility for student assessment. Less frequently, an academic review officer (10%), an assessment officer (13%), or a student affairs administrator (14%), is in charge of day-to-day activities. Compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions are more likely to have an academic affairs administrator or a faculty member in charge of day-to-day responsibilities. Conversely, baccalaureate institutions are less likely to have a student affairs administrator in charge of day-to-day activities.

Reporting Relationship of Individual with Operating Responsibility for Student Assessment

Finally, institutions were asked to whom the individual with day-to-day operating responsibility for student assessment reports. Survey respondents selected from the following five offices: chief executive officer; chief academic officer; chief student affairs officer; institutional research officer; and academic review and evaluation officer. Figure 25 presents the responses from baccalaureate and all institutions.

Figure 25. Reporting Relationship of Individual with Operating Responsibility for Student Assessment Activities



For baccalaureate institutions, assessment managers responsible for day-to-day activities most often report to the chief academic officer (66%) and in some institutions report to the chief executive officer (28%). In hardly any institutions do they report to the chief student affairs officer (2%), the institutional research officer (2%), or the academic review and evaluation officer (2%). Compared to all institutions, assessment managers at baccalaureate institutions are more likely to report to the chief academic officer.

Evaluating the Student Assessment Process

The student assessment literature insists upon the importance of institutions regularly evaluating their assessment processes. Consequently, our survey inquired whether institutions have evaluated their student assessment plan or process and if so, what elements of their plan or process have been reviewed.

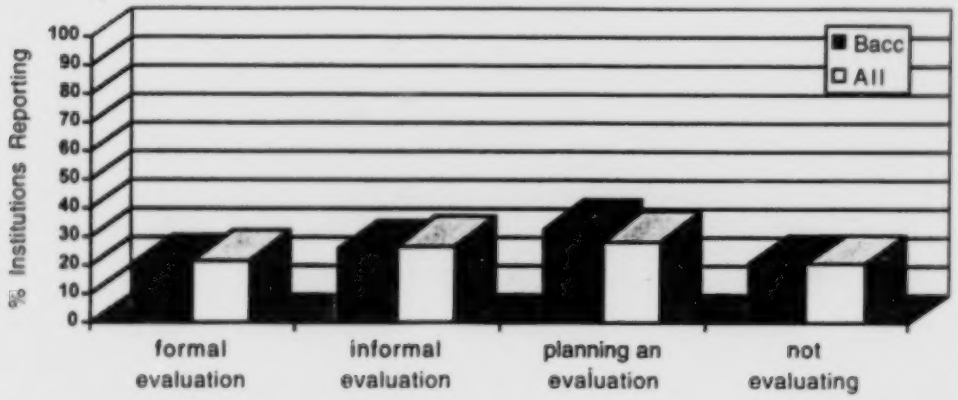
Status of Evaluation of Student Assessment Plan or Process

Institutions were asked whether they have conducted a formal evaluation, an informal evaluation, are currently developing plans for an evaluation, or are not planning to evaluate their assessment process. The results for baccalaureate and all institutions are depicted in Figure 26.

Approximately half (47%) of all baccalaureate institutions have evaluated their assessment plan; 21% have conducted a formal evaluation and 26% have conducted an informal evaluation. If they have not yet evaluated their assessment plan, baccalaureate institutions are likely to be developing an evaluation plan (33%) and slightly less likely to not be planning to evaluate their assessment process (21%). Compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions are slightly less

likely to have conducted an evaluation and slightly more likely to be planning to conduct an evaluation.

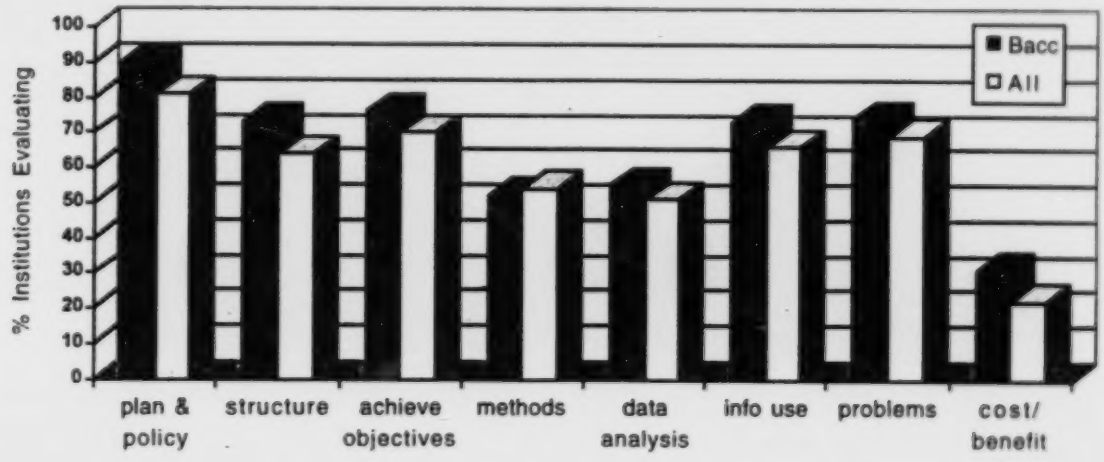
Figure 26. Status of Student Assessment Evaluation



Elements of Student Assessment Evaluation

Those institutions that have formally or informally evaluated their student assessment process were asked which of eight elements were reviewed as part of the evaluation: student assessment plans and policies; structure and responsibility for student assessment; achievement of intended objectives for student assessment; reliability and validity of assessment instruments and methods; quality of data analysis; use of assessment information in institutional decision making; problems encountered while conducting assessment; and the costs and benefits of student assessment. Results of this question for baccalaureate and all institutions are shown in Figure 27.

Figure 27. Elements of Student Assessment Evaluation



Among the baccalaureate institutions that evaluate their student assessment process, most take several elements of that process into consideration. They are most likely to assess their student assessment plan and policies (90%), the achievement of intended objectives for student

assessment (76%), the problems encountered while conducting assessment activities (74%), the use of assessment information in decision making (73%), and the structure and responsibility for student assessment (73%). These institutions are least likely to compare the costs and benefits of student assessment (31%). Compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions are more likely to take all these components into consideration during an evaluation except for the reliability and validity of assessment instruments and methods.

Summary Observations

Baccalaureate institutions seem to have strong institution-wide support for student assessment. The student assessment policies on baccalaureate campuses tend to be applied to all academic units across the institution. Although these institutions are not likely to directly refer to student assessment in their mission statements, they have a strong focus on undergraduate education in general and they are likely to have enunciated specific outcomes for their undergraduates in their mission statements. They also report a combination of internal and external purposes for engaging in student assessment.

Furthermore, these institutions tend to involve faculty in the student assessment process. Compared to all institutions, academic senates are more likely to have approval authority for changes to student assessment plans or policies, there is more likely to be a faculty committee that addresses assessment, faculty are more likely to be in charge of the day-to-day assessment activities, and in almost all baccalaureate institutions, faculty members are represented on an institution-wide committee for student assessment. Students are also more likely to be represented on these committees in baccalaureate institutions than they are in all institutions.

Despite the involvement of students and faculty, administrators are still perceived as more supportive of student assessment than are either faculty or students. Academic affairs administrators are the student assessment leaders on most baccalaureate campuses and are also most likely to manage the day-to-day student assessment responsibilities. Student affairs administrators are not as involved with student assessment as they are in all institutions.

6. ASSESSMENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND POLICIES

Reports on the existence of specific institutional practices and policies designed to promote student assessment management. Baccalaureate institutional administrators seem to be taking an unobtrusive approach in setting policies and developing practices — there is very little use of student assessment information in making either budget or faculty evaluation and reward decisions. However, compared to all institutions, they are more likely to reward or evaluate faculty based on assessment participation or outcomes. Less obtrusive policies, such as distributing assessment results and providing access to student performance information are more prevalent in baccalaureate institutions.

A fourth domain in our conceptual framework is that of assessment management practices and policies providing mechanisms for managing the student assessment process and directing the ways in which student assessment information is used throughout the institution. Assessment management practices and policies are suggested in the literature as powerful means through which institutions can support student assessment and encourage the use of collected assessment information. Conceptual dimensions of assessment management practices and policies such as their comprehensiveness, consistency, and the extent to which they are employed within an institution are expected to influence internal support for student assessment and the likelihood of achieving institutional impacts from assessment information.

Our survey asked about 41 specific institutional practices and policies promoting student assessment management. These items were factor analyzed to create nine comprehensive indices. In this section we will present results of these assessment management practice and policy indices, rather than of individual items.

Practices for Managing Student Assessment

What kinds of practices do institutions develop to manage and promote their student assessment process? We asked respondents about the existence of a variety of specific institutional practices to manage the student assessment process in four areas: academic resource allocation, student information systems, internal access to student assessment information, and distribution of assessment reports and studies. Scores for institutions for all specific practices in these four areas are presented in Appendix A. We used factor analysis to create indices of management practices in these four areas. Briefly, the four indices are:

1. Academic Budget Decisions: whether the institution's academic budget process compares academic units on student performance indicators and allocates resources competitively among them; or rewards them for improvement based on student performance indicators.

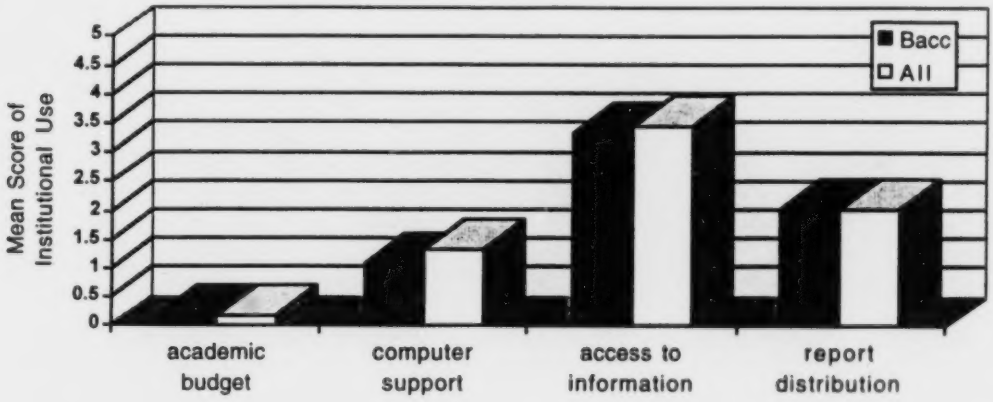
2. Computer Support: whether the institution has a computerized student information system that includes student performance indicators; tracks students from application through graduation; and is integrated with faculty, curricular, and financial databases.

3. Access to Student Information: whether assessment information on individual students is available to institutional researchers, assessment or evaluation professionals; senior academic administrators; department chairs or academic program administrators; student affairs professionals; and faculty advisors.

4. Distribution of Reports: whether assessment reports are regularly distributed to students, faculty, academic administrators, student affairs professionals, employers, and the general public.

Figure 28 presents information on these four indices. Each was originally measured on a different scale. For the purposes of this graph, we have translated each index to a scale of zero to five. Therefore, we can determine which of these practices is more prevalent in baccalaureate and all institutions in our study.

Figure 28. Extent of Institutional Use of Assessment Management Practices



Scale: 0 = institution uses no practices in index; 5 = institution uses all practices in index.

Of these four assessment management practices, baccalaureate institutions are most likely to provide access to individual students' performance data to a number of internal constituents. For example, one of the items that comprises this index is whether student assessment data are accessible to senior academic administrators — 75% of baccalaureate respondents report that they are. If internal constituents have access to student assessment data, they should be able to make decisions based on these data, use the data to conduct studies, and even advise individual students based on their assessment information.

The next most prevalent student assessment management practice is distributing student assessment reports to internal and external constituents. This index is comprised of whether assessment information is distributed to six individuals. Most baccalaureate institutions regularly distribute reports to academic administrators (91%), faculty (71%), and student affairs professionals (51%). Fewer baccalaureate institutions regularly distribute reports to students (20%), the general public (7%), or employers (2%).

Comparatively speaking, using computer information systems to manage the student assessment process is a less-often used practice. One of the items in this index is whether the institution has a student information system that tracks students from application through graduation. Less than half of baccalaureate institutions (40%) report that they have such a system. Even fewer have either a system that includes student performance indicators or is integrated with other institutional databases.

Using the budget to compare and reward units or personnel is practically non-existent. For example, only 3% of institutions report that they reward academic units for improvement based on student performance indicators. Compared to all institutions in our study, baccalaureate institutions are slightly less likely to use computer support for assessment processes and to provide access to assessment information.

Policies Supporting and Promoting the Use of Student Assessment

While the previous section focused on practices used to manage student assessment, this section focuses on the policies used to both support student assessment and guide how the resulting data are incorporated into other institutional processes. We asked survey respondents about the extent to which they have developed a variety of specific institutional policies to support and promote student assessment in four areas: student involvement in assessment; professional development for student assessment; training for student affairs staff; faculty evaluation and rewards; and academic planning and review processes. Factor analysis produced five indices of student assessment policies; detailed information on these indices can be found in Appendix B. Briefly, these five indices are:

1. Student Involvement: extent to which the institution requires students to participate in student assessment activities; provides students with information on the purpose and uses of student assessment; and provides individual feedback regarding student performance results.

2. Professional Development: extent to which the institution provides funds for faculty to attend assessment conferences; faculty workshops or consultative services on student assessment; assistance to faculty to improve use of student assessment; and workshops/seminars for academic administrators on assessment.

3. Student Affairs Training: extent to which the institution requires student affairs staff to receive training on assessment and provides student assessment workshops for student affairs administrators.

4. Faculty Evaluation: extent to which the institution considers evidence of student performance in faculty evaluation for promotion; incorporates evidence of student performance into faculty evaluation for salary and merit; considers faculty scholarship on assessment in promotion, tenure, or salary reviews; considers faculty participation in assessment in promotion, tenure, or salary reviews; and recognizes faculty for effective use of assessment.

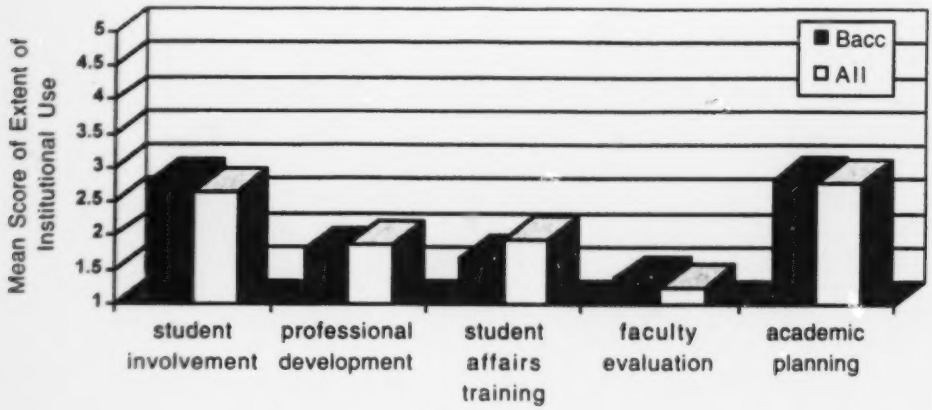
5. Academic Planning and Review: extent to which the institution incorporates student performance data into academic department or undergraduate program planning or review; general education or core curriculum review; course-level review and development; and review and planning for student academic support services.

Figure 29 presents the means for these five indices for baccalaureate and all institutions. Scores for the individual items within each index are available in Appendix A.

Of the five assessment management policies presented in Figure 29, baccalaureate institutions are most likely to incorporate student assessment data into academic planning and review processes (2.82). For example, respondents report that in many departments, student performance data are incorporated into undergraduate program planning or review and into general education or core curriculum review—two of the items comprising this index. This finding provides evidence that baccalaureate institutions are engaging in student assessment to improve undergraduate programs, a purpose they listed as very important.

Baccalaureate institutions also make fairly extensive use of policies encouraging student involvement in assessment activities (2.79). For the three items that comprise this index, baccalaureate institutions report that many departments require students to participate in assessment activities and provide students with information while some departments provide students feedback on student assessment. Requiring participation and providing information on assessment purposes should increase student involvement, while providing individual feedback may improve student performance.

Figure 29. Extent of Institutional Use of Assessment Management Policies



1=not done at all; 2=done in a few depts; 3=done in some depts; 4=done in many depts; 5=done in most depts.

Baccalaureate institutions are slightly more likely to offer professional development on student assessment to faculty and academic administrators (1.79) than they are to offer training and workshops for student affairs staff (1.66). Within the index of professional development, baccalaureate institutions report that some departments offer funds for faculty to attend assessment conferences. Only a few departments provide assistance to faculty in the form of paid leaves, stipends, and course reductions.

Institutions are much less likely to evaluate and reward faculty based on student assessment participation or results (1.37). For example, respondents report that at their campus, less than a few departments consider faculty participation in assessment in promotion, tenure or salary reviews. Neither is student performance used to reward or evaluate faculty in more than a few departments. While these uses of student assessment data are fairly intrusive, one of the items in this index is more benign: publicly recognizing faculty for effective use of assessment. Nonetheless, again, only a few departments within baccalaureate institutions are using this strategy.

In comparison with all institutions in our study, baccalaureate institutions are less likely to provide professional development on student assessment to academic administrators, faculty, and student affairs administrators. Perhaps funding for professional development initiatives is limited in baccalaureate institutions. Baccalaureate institutions are slightly more likely to involve students in student assessment, reward and evaluate faculty using student assessment information, and use student assessment information in program and course planning and review than are all institutions.

Summary Observations

Baccalaureate institutions make little use of student assessment information in making either budget or faculty evaluation and reward decisions. Less obtrusive policies, such as distributing assessment results and providing access to student performance information, are more prevalent. Compared to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions are less likely either to use computers in their assessment process or to provide access to student assessment information, findings that are likely related. Also, in comparison to all institutions, baccalaureate institutions are less likely to offer professional development to either faculty or to academic or student affairs administrators. However, they are more likely to involve students in the assessment process and to reward or evaluate faculty based on assessment participation or outcomes.

7. USES AND IMPACTS OF STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Explores two important questions regarding how institutions use student assessment information in decision making and the impact it has on institutions. Baccalaureate institutions are not using student assessment information to any great degree in making academic decisions and report that student assessment has had little impact on either their internal processes or their external relationships.

As noted in our introduction, effective student assessment processes contribute to improvements in institutional and student performance. Consequently, two important questions in our research are: 1) how do institutions use student assessment information and 2) how does student assessment impact institutions?

From the literature we identified and focused on two critical dimensions: the use of student assessment information in academic decision making, and the internal and external impacts on the institution that have resulted from student assessment. Our survey included ten academic decision and fourteen institutional impact items. Institutions' scores for each use and impact item are presented in Appendix A and details on the indices are in Appendix B. We used factor analysis to create indices of student assessment uses and impacts in these five areas. Briefly, the five indices are:

1. Educational Decisions: the extent to which student assessment information is used in revising undergraduate academic mission or goals; designing or reorganizing academic programs or majors; designing or reorganizing student affairs units; allocating resources to academic units; modifying student assessment plans, policies, or processes; modifying general education curriculum; modifying student out-of-class learning experiences; creating or modifying distance learning initiatives; modifying teaching methods; and modifying student academic support services.

2. Faculty Decisions: the extent to which student assessment information is used in decisions on faculty promotion and tenure; and salary increases or rewards.

3. Faculty Impacts: whether student assessment has stimulated campus discussions of undergraduate education; contributed to faculty satisfaction; contributed to faculty interest in teaching; and led to changes in teaching methods used.

4. Student Impacts: whether student assessment contributes to student satisfaction; affects student retention or graduation rates; affects student grade performance; and affects student achievement on external examinations.

5. External Impacts: whether student assessment information affects student application or acceptance rates; allocation of state funding; evaluation from regional accreditation agency; private fund-raising results; success on grant applications; communications with external constituents; and institutional reputation or image.

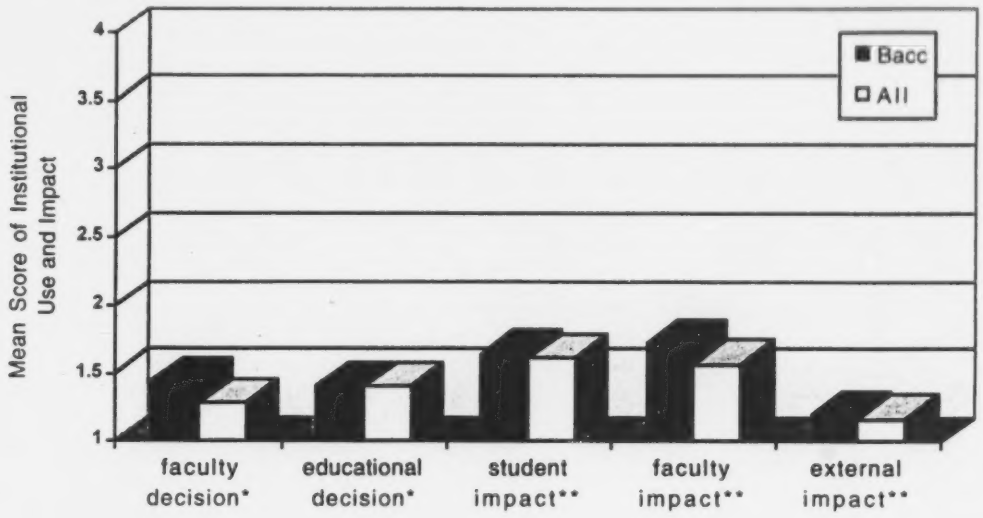
Figure 30 presents the means for these five indices for baccalaureate and all institutions.

Uses in Academic Decisions

Regarding academic decisions, baccalaureate institutions are slightly more likely to use student assessment information to make faculty related decisions (1.44) than to make educational decisions (1.40). Within the faculty decision index, baccalaureate institutions are more likely to use student assessment information in decisions on promotion or tenure (1.70) than in decisions on

salary increases or rewards (1.49). Within the educational decision index, baccalaureate institutions are most likely to use student assessment information to design or reorganize academic programs or majors (2.61). Also within this index, baccalaureate institutions are least likely to create or modify distance learning initiatives (1.52).

Figure 30. Institutional Uses and Impacts of Student Assessment Information



*Use scale: 1=no action or influence unknown, 2=action taken, data not influential; 3=action taken, data somewhat influential; 4=action taken, data very influential.
**Impact scale: 1=not monitored, do not know; 2=monitored, negative impact; 3=monitored, no known impact; 4=monitored, positive impact.

Baccalaureate institutions are not making great use of student assessment information in making either faculty or educational decisions. However, compared to all institutions, they make greater use of student assessment information in faculty-related decisions and just as much use of student assessment information in educational decisions. Perhaps baccalaureate institutions are more likely to use student assessment information to make faculty decisions because of the high value they place on both teaching and quality in undergraduate education.

Institutional Impacts

In terms of the impacts of student assessment information, baccalaureate institutions are most likely to report that student assessment impacts faculty. Perhaps faculty are more likely to be impacted because these institutions are more likely to use assessment information in making faculty decisions related to promotions and salary increases. Within this index, institutions are most likely to report that student assessment has led to changes in teaching methods used (2.60), and least likely to report that student assessment has contributed to faculty satisfaction (1.88). Many student assessment techniques require greater faculty effort and involvement, which may not lead to greater faculty satisfaction, especially in the short-run.

Baccalaureate institutions are less likely to report that student assessment has impacted students. Within this index, institutions are most likely to report that student assessment has affected student retention or graduation rates (2.26) and least likely to report that student

assessment has affected student grade performance (1.91). These findings are quite interesting; baccalaureate institutional respondents believe that student assessment results have led to students remaining enrolled at the institution longer. However, they are less likely to believe that students grades are higher due to assessment. Therefore, it appears that something other than better grades is contributing to student retention. Perhaps students become more involved with the institutions through assessment activities and are therefore more likely to remain enrolled longer.

Institutions were least likely to say that student assessment had impacted their external relationships. The most commonly affected external domain is in the receipt of an evaluation from the regional accreditation agency (2.57). The least commonly affected external domain is the allocation of state funding (1.24). Most of the baccalaureate institutions that responded to this study are private.

Overall, baccalaureate institutions report that student assessment has not greatly impacted either their internally- or their externally-oriented processes and functions. However, compared to other institutions, baccalaureate institutions are slightly more likely to report that their students and their external relationships are impacted by student assessment. They are considerably more likely than all institutions to report that their faculty are impacted by student assessment.

Summary Observations

Baccalaureate institutions are not using student assessment information to any great degree in making either faculty or educational decisions. However, they are more likely to use assessment information to make faculty decisions than are all institutions. Also, baccalaureate institutions do not report that student assessment has impacted either their internal processes or their external environment. However, compared to all institutions, they are more likely to report that their faculty members are impacted by student assessment. While it appears that student assessment information is not widely used by baccalaureate institutions, these institutions do seem to be doing more than other institutions are to involve faculty in assessment activities.

8. KEY RELATIONSHIPS

Internal influences, such as a mission emphasis on student assessment and excellence in undergraduate education; conducting assessment for internal improvement purposes; and providing a number of administrative and governance activities to support student assessment have more influence on baccalaureate institutions' involvement with student assessment than do external forces. Engaging in student assessment for both state and internal purposes; collecting extensive cognitive student data; using a wide variety of data collection methods; extensive faculty and administrative support; involving a great number of internal constituents through professional development; involving students in assessment; providing access to assessment information; and conducting studies to link students' performance to their interactions with the institution are related to more extensive uses of student assessment data in making academic decisions. Baccalaureate institutions conducting evaluations of their assessment process; sponsoring extensive administrative and governance activities; offering professional development opportunities to student affairs staff; conducting studies linking student performance to their institutional interactions; using the student assessment data they collect to evaluate faculty and to plan and review academic programs; and collecting extensive cognitive data report that student assessment has had a greater impact on their internal processes and external relationships.

In the previous sections we have examined the domains of external influences on, the institutional approaches to, support for, management policies and practices regarding, and uses and impacts of student assessment. Even more important is understanding how these domains influence positive uses and impacts of student assessment data within institutions. That is, which external influences, institutional approaches to assessment, organizational and administrative support patterns, and assessment management practices and policies are most likely to promote the use of and positive impacts from student assessment information?

In this section, we will examine three key relationships. First, we discuss how external influences affect an institution's approach to student assessment (the type and extent of their use of student assessment). Then we examine how external influences and institutional characteristics, approaches, support patterns, practices and policies affect an institution's use of student assessment data. Finally we examine how these domains relate to positive institutional impacts from student assessment. (The information in this section uses the indices discussed in previous sections. For detailed information on the indices, please refer to Appendix B.)

External and Internal Influences on Student Assessment Approaches

Are external forces more influential than internal forces in determining how baccalaureate institutions approach student assessment? We used three multiple regression models to compare the influences of state characteristics related to student assessment, regional accreditation affiliation, and institution-wide support for student assessment on the extent of an institution's use of three approaches to student assessment: cognitive assessment (the extent to which data are collected on measures of students' cognitive performance); affective assessment (the extent to which data are collected on measures of students' affective development or performance); and post-college assessment (the extent to which data are collected on measures of students' post-enrollment performance). In these three models, the predictor variables stem from three domains: state assessment approach, accrediting region, and institution-wide support. The predictor variables in this model are shown in Table 6 and defined in detail in Appendix B.

Table 6. The Influence of Institution-Wide Support, State Assessment Approach, and Accrediting Region on the Extent of Institutional Approach to Student Assessment for Public Baccalaureate Institutions

	Extent of Institutional Approach					
	Cognitive Assessment		Affective Assessment		Post-College Assessment	
	Beta	ΔR^2	Beta	ΔR^2	Beta	ΔR^2
Adjusted R^2	**.17****		**.13****		**.05****	
Institution-Wide Support						
Mission emphasis			.16*	.03	.19**	.04
Administrative & governance activities	.24**	.09	.23**	.08		
Administrator & faculty support						
Conduct for internal improvement	.22**	.03	.15*	.02		
Conduct for state			-.16*	.02		
Conduct for accreditation						
State Assessment Approach						
Authority structure						
Form of state assessment initiative					-.15*	.02
Common indicators/outcomes						
Accrediting Region						
Middle States	-.16*	.05				
North Central	.17*	.02				
New England						
Northwest***						
Southern						
Western						

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

***Since "accrediting region" was a categorical variable, Northwest Accrediting Region was left out of this regression because its effect on cognitive competencies, based on ANOVA, was closest to the mean.

Cognitive Assessment

The first two columns in Table 6 show the regression results for the relationship of the predictor variables from the three domains on the extent of institutional use of cognitive assessment. This model is fairly strong, explaining 17% of the variance in the use of cognitive assessment. Which of the variables has the most influence on the extent to which baccalaureate institutions assess students' cognitive abilities? The institution-wide patterns of support and the accrediting region are influential, while state characteristics are not. Within the institution-wide support domain, the extent of the institution's administrative and governance activities and an institutional emphasis on student assessment for internal improvement purposes are both important predictors of the extent of assessing students' cognitive abilities. Offering administrative and governance activities and assessing students for internal purposes both belie a dedication to the assessment process. This dedication evidences itself in the greater extent of cognitive data collected. In terms of accrediting regions, institutions in the North Central regional accrediting region are more likely to assess students' cognitive abilities, while institutions in the Middle States region are less likely to do so.

Affective Assessment

The middle columns in Table 6 show the regression results for the relationship of the predictor variables in the three domains to the extent of institutional use of affective assessment. This model is not as strong, explaining only 13% of the variance in the collection of affective data.

The extent of affective assessment conducted by baccalaureate institutions is solely affected by institution-wide support patterns. The extent of administrative and governance activities offered, a mission emphasizing assessment, and conducting student assessment for internal purposes are all important influences on affective assessment. These three actions demonstrate that the institution is dedicated to the student assessment process; this dedication evidences itself in the greater collection of affective data. Interestingly, if an institution reports that state mandates are an important reason for conducting student assessment, it will collect less affective data. Perhaps states are less likely to be asking institutions to collect affective data.

Post-College Assessment

Finally, the last two columns in Table 6 present the regression results for the relationship of the predictor variables in the three domains on the extent of institutional use of post-college assessment. This model is the weakest of the three, explaining only 5% of the variance in the collection of post-college data. There are only two significant predictors in this model. First, having an academic mission that emphasizes assessment and excellence in undergraduate education influences the amount of post-college data collected. Institutions that prioritize assessment and undergraduate education are likely to have extensive data collection efforts that include a focus on former students. Second, in states that are active in setting policies and writing legislation on student assessment, baccalaureate institutions are less likely to collect post-college data. Perhaps states are not as concerned with post-college information as they are with information on currently enrolled students at baccalaureate institutions.

Influences on Using Assessment Information in Academic Decisions

How do baccalaureate institutions effectively promote and support the use of student assessment information in academic decision making? Within the domain of academic decision making, we created two indices reflecting the use of student assessment information: educational decision making and faculty decision making (these indices are described in detail in Appendix B). We used multiple regression to examine the influences of external forces, institutional size, institutional approach to student assessment, institution-wide support, and assessment management practices and policies on using student assessment information in both educational and faculty decisions. The predictor variables in this model are defined in detail in Appendix B. Table 7 presents the results of these two regression models for baccalaureate institutions.

Influence on Use of Assessment Information in Educational Decisions

The educational decisions model works well for baccalaureate institutions, explaining 40% of the variance in the influence of student assessment data on educational decisions. While there are significant predictor variables from the domains of assessment approach, institution-wide support, and practices and policies, most of the significant variables are from the assessment management practices and policies domain.

Within the domain of institution-wide support for student assessment, baccalaureate institutions that conduct student assessment for internal purposes are more likely to use the resulting student assessment data in making educational decisions. Within the domain of assessment management practices and policies, institutions that use assessment information to evaluate and reward faculty, involve students in the assessment process, and offer professional development on student assessment to faculty, academic administrators and student affairs staff and administrators are more likely to use student assessment information to make educational decisions. Within the assessment approach domain, the more studies baccalaureate institutions conduct on the link between students' performance and their educational experiences, and the more instruments they use in collecting assessment data, the more likely they are to use student

Table 7. The Influence of External Influences, Institutional Context, Institutional Approach, Institution-Wide Support, and Management Practices and Policies on Using Student Assessment Information in Educational and Faculty Decisions for Baccalaureate Institutions

	Educational Decisions		Faculty Decisions	
	Beta	ΔR^2	Beta	ΔR^2
Adjusted R^2	**.40****		**.31****	
External Influences				
Middle States accrediting region				
North Central accrediting region			-.14**	.02
New England accrediting region				
Southern accrediting region				
Western accrediting region				
State initiative for student assessment				
State approach to student assessment				
Accreditation influence				
Institutional Context				
Enrollment				
Control (1 = public, 2 = private)			.12*	.01
Institutional Approach to Student Assessment				
Cognitive assessment			.17**	.03
Affective assessment				
Post-college assessment				
Number of instruments	.13**	.02		
Student-centered methods			.17**	.02
External methods			.17**	.06
Total assessment studies	.16**	.03		
Institution-Wide Support for Student Assessment				
Mission emphasis				
Conduct for internal improvement	.19**	.09		
Conduct for accreditation			-.17**	.04
Conduct for state			.21**	.02
Administrative & governance activities				
Administrator & faculty support			.13**	.02
Formal centralized policy				
Institution-wide planning group				
Conducted evaluation of assessment process			-.10*	.01
Assessment Management Practices and Policies				
Academic Budget decisions				
Computer support				
Access to information			.14**	.09
Distribution of reports				
Student involvement	.16**	.03		
Professional development	.12*	.17		
Student affairs training	.12*	.01		
Faculty evaluation[1]	.18**	.05	n/inc	
Academic planning & review[2]	n/inc			

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

[1]The factor "faculty evaluation" was not entered into the regression model predicting use of student assessment information in making faculty decisions, since many of the items comprising these two factors were similar.

[2]The factor "academic planning and review" was not entered into the regression model predicting use of student assessment information in making educational decisions, since many of the items comprising these two factors were similar.

assessment information to make educational decisions. Most of these significant predictor variables symbolize a commitment to the assessment process. Therefore one would expect that those institutions that are committed to the assessment process would use the resulting information to make educational decisions. Professional development is an important predictor variable, as the more internal constituents know about student assessment, the more likely they will be to use the resulting information in making educational decisions. Similarly, the number of studies conducted by an institution is an important predictor variable, as the more studies the institution does on the link between students' performance and their interactions with the institution, the more direction internal constituents will have in making decisions about academic policies and practices.

Influences on the Use of Assessment Information on Faculty Decisions

The faculty decisions model also works well for baccalaureate institutions, explaining 31% of the variance in making faculty-related decisions. In our regression model, there are significant predictor variables from all five domains. The domain of institution-wide support for student assessment has the most significant predictor variables. Baccalaureate institutions that report that meeting state mandates is an important purpose for conducting assessment are more likely to use assessment information in faculty decisions. Conversely, baccalaureate institutions that report that meeting accreditation mandates is an important purpose for conducting assessment are less likely to use assessment information to make faculty decisions. Baccalaureate institutions that have strong faculty and administrative support for student assessment are more likely to use assessment information in making faculty decisions. Those institutions that have conducted an evaluation of their assessment process are less likely to be using assessment information in faculty decisions.

There are three significant variables from the institutional approach domain. The greater the use of both external and student-centered methods to collect assessment data, the more likely the institution is to use student assessment data to make faculty-related decisions. In addition, the greater the extent of cognitive data collected, the more likely the institution is to use student assessment data in making faculty decisions.

There is one significant predictor variable from the assessment management practices and policies domain. Institutions that provide broad access to student assessment information are more likely to use student assessment data to make faculty-related decisions. In the external influences domain, institutions in the North Central accrediting region are less likely to use student assessment information in making faculty-related decisions. Finally, in the institutional context domain, private baccalaureate institutions are more likely to use student assessment information to make faculty-related decisions.

Interestingly, state mandates appear to spur institutions to make faculty-related decisions, while accreditation mandates have the opposite effect. Perhaps states are more concerned with holding faculty accountable for student learning at baccalaureate institutions than are accrediting agencies. The more data an institution has gathered, the more likely they are to use these data to make faculty-related decisions. One would expect that a proliferation of data is necessary for such decisions. Administrative and faculty support are also important predictors of using assessment data to make faculty-related decisions. This finding is expected, as using assessment data to make faculty-related decisions can be controversial.

Influences of Student Assessment Information on Internal and External Institutional Performance

How does the use of student assessment information affect various internal and external institutional performance dimensions? In our survey, baccalaureate institutions reported whether, and the extent to which, student assessment has impacted various aspects of faculty and student performance and their relationships with the external environment. We created three indices

reflecting the impact of student assessment information on faculty, students, and the institutions' external relations (these indices are described in detail in Appendix B and in section seven). We used multiple regression to examine the influences of external forces, institutional size, institutional approach to student assessment, institution-wide support, and assessment management practices and policies on the impact of student assessment information on students, faculty, and the institution's external environment. The predictor variables in this model are defined in detail in Appendix B. Table 8 presents the results of these three regression models for baccalaureate institutions.

Influences on the Impact of Student Assessment Information on Faculty

What variables predict how extensive an impactstudent assessment will have on faculty and their activities? The first two columns of Table 8 show the statistically significant predictors of faculty impacts. The model on faculty impacts is fairly strong, predicting 29% of the variance in the impact student assessment information has on faculty. Institution-wide support for student assessment is key, according to the results of our regression model. If baccalaureate institutions offer administrative and governance activities on student assessment, evaluate their assessment process, and place an emphasis on student assessment in their mission statement, it is more likely that their assessment activities will impact faculty.

The assessment management practices and policies used by the institution are also important determinants of whether their assessment activities will affect faculty. Institutions that use student assessment information in their academic planning and review process are more likely to report that their assessment activities have impacted faculty. However, institutions that use student assessment information to make budget allocation decisions are not likely to report that student assessment information has had a positive impact on faculty.

Within the institutional approach domain, baccalaureate institutions that conduct studies linking students' performance to their interactions with the institution are likely to report that their assessment activities have impacted faculty. No variables from either the external influences or the institutional context domains were significant in this model.

Administrative and governance activities, evaluations of student assessment processes, and academic planning and review processes are all activities that are likely to involve faculty. It seems reasonable that faculty involvement in these activities would lead to a greater impact on faculty by student assessment information. It is also somewhat expected that faculty would not be positively impacted by assessment information in institutions that use assessment data in making budget decisions. These actions are likely to be controversial. Finally, it may be expected that institutions that conduct studies linking students' performance to their interactions with the institution would report a positive impact on faculty by their student assessment information. The more data faculty have to work with, the more likely they are to be impacted by these data.

Influences on the Impact of Assessment Information on Students

The middle two columns on Table 8 show which variables are statistically significant presictors of achieving student impacts from assessment in baccalaureate institutions .The model on student impacts is slightly weaker than the model on faculty impacts, explaining 24% of the variance in the impact of assessment data on students. Within the assessment management practices and policies domain, institutions that use student assessment data in their academic planning and review process and those that train student affairs staff in assessment are likely to report that their assessment activities have impacted students. Within the institution-wide support domain, institutions that conduct evaluations of their assessment process are likely to report that their assessment information has impacted students. However, those institutions that have a formal centralized policy for assessment are not likely to report that their assessment information

Table 8. The Influence of External Influences, Institutional Context, Institutional Approach, Institution-Wide Support, and Management Practices and Policies on Faculty, Student, and External Impacts for Baccalaureate Institutions

	Faculty Impacts		Student Impacts		External Impacts	
	Beta	ΔR^2	Beta	ΔR^2	Beta	ΔR^2
Adjusted R^2	**.29****		**.24****		**.22****	
External Influences						
Middle States accrediting region						
North Central accrediting region						
New England accrediting region						
Southern accrediting region						
Western accrediting region						
State initiative for student assessment						
State approach to student assessment						
Accreditation influence					-.12*	.02
Institutional Context						
Enrollment						
Control (1=public, 2-private)						
Institutional Approach to Student Assessment						
Cognitive assessment					.17**	.02
Affective assessment						
Post-college assessment						
Number of instruments						
Student-centered methods						
External methods						
Total assessment studies	.24**	.14	.19**	.05		
Institution-Wide Support for Student Assessment						
Mission emphasis	.10*	.01			.11*	.01
Conduct for internal improvement						
Conduct for accreditation						
Conduct for state						
Administrative & governance activities	.21**	.04				
Administrator & faculty support						
Formal centralized policy			-.12*	.01		
Institution-wide planning group					-.12*	.01
Conducted evaluation of assessment process	.11*	.01	.13*	.01	.16**	.03
Assessment Management Practices and Policies						
Academic budget decisions	-.11*	.01				
Computer support						
Access to information						
Distribution of reports						
Student involvement						
Professional development						
Student affairs training			.18**	.03		
Faculty evaluation					.14*	.03
Academic planning & review	.22**	.07	.24**	.12	.16**	.10

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

has impacted students. Within the approach domain, the more studies baccalaureate institutions conduct on linking students' performance to their interactions with the institution, the more likely student assessment is to impact students.

It would be expected that conducting studies linking students' performance to their institutional interactions and using student assessment data to plan and review academic courses and programs would eventually impact students. It is interesting that institutions that train their student affairs staff in assessment report a greater impact by their assessment data on students. Perhaps student affairs staff have more contact with students and can explain assessment benefits to them. It is also interesting that in institutions with formal centralized policies for assessment, students are less likely to be impacted by assessment information. It is likely that in these institutions, individual students do not receive feedback on their assessments as the processes are centrally controlled and thus further removed from the faculty and administrators who have contact with students.

Influences on the Impact of Assessment Information on External Institutional Relations

What variables predict how extensive an impact student assessment will have on a baccalaureate institution's external relations? The last two columns in Table 8 demonstrate that the model on external impacts is slightly less powerful than the model on student impacts, explaining 22% of the variance in the external impact from student assessment information. Within the approach domain, the more cognitive data collected by the institution, the more likely these data are to have an external impact. Within the assessment management practices and policies domain, institutions that use student assessment information in their academic planning and review processes and in evaluating faculty are more likely to report that engaging in student assessment has had an external impact. Within the domain of institution-wide support, institutions that have conducted an evaluation of their assessment process and those that emphasize assessment in their mission statement are more likely to report that engaging in student assessment has impacted their external environment. Those that have an institution-wide planning group for assessment are less likely to report that their assessment information has had an external impact. Within the external influences domain, institutions that say their accrediting agency has influenced their assessment activities are less apt to report that their assessment information has had an external impact.

It is interesting that institutions that use student assessment information in evaluating faculty are more likely to report that engaging in student assessment has had an external impact. Perhaps state mandates require faculty evaluations based on student performance and those institutions that comply report favorable impacts of such compliance. It also makes sense that those institutions that have evaluated their assessment process report that their assessment information has positively impacted their external relationships. If institutions can demonstrate the effects of their assessment program, it is highly likely that they will use these findings to impress and to improve their relationships with external evaluators.

Summary Observations

In examining how internal and external forces compare in influencing baccalaureate institutions' approaches to assessing students, it is clear that internal influences and accrediting region are more influential than are state characteristics. In instances where state characteristics are significant, they tent to have a negative effect on the extent of data collection at institutions. Three internal strategies are particularly important in determining the extent of student data collected: emphasizing student assessment and excellence in undergraduate education in the mission statement, conducting assessment for internal improvement purposes, and providing a number of administrative and governance activities on student assessment.

If baccalaureate institutions are to benefit from engaging in student assessment, they should not only be collecting student data, but also using these data to make academic decisions. Educationally-oriented decisions were influenced by a different set of variables than were faculty-related decisions. For educational decisions, there were five important predictors in our model: assessing students for internal improvement purposes; using assessment information to evaluate and reward faculty; involving students in the assessment process; offering professional development for faculty, academic administrators, and student affairs staff; and conducting studies on the link between students' performance and their interactions with their institutions. Institutions that intend to use assessment data for improvement purposes and that conduct studies to better understand how their actions influence student performance are in a better position to use student assessment data in making educational decisions.

For faculty-related decisions, there were six important predictors in the model: assessing students to meet state requirements; having faculty and administrative support for assessment; evaluating their assessment process; using both external and student-centered methods; collecting cognitive data; and providing broad access to data. If bacvcalaureate institutions are assessing students to meet state requirements, states may be requiring that assessment data be part of faculty-related decisions. Furthermore, institutions that want to use student assessment data in making faculty decisions likely would need to have strong faculty support for the assessment process. In addition to these six variables, private institutions are more likely to use assessment data in making faculty decisions. Conversely, those institutions that report that they conduct assessment to meet accreditation requirements are less likely to use assessment information in making faculty decisions.

If engaging in student assessment makes a difference in baccalaureate institutions, they should report that it is impacting their internal processes and external relations. Within institutions reporting impacts from their assessment process, external influences were not important predictors with one exception — if the institution conducted assessment to meet accreditation requirements, they were not likely to report that their assessment activities had an external impact. In these cases, it is likely that the accreditation agency is influencing the institution more than the institutions' assessment activities are influencing their accreditation process. The existence of an assessment planning group also has a negative influence on external impacts. Perhaps these groups focusing their efforts on internal rather than external uses of assessment information. Positive influences on external impacts include the extent of cognitive assessment data collected and whether the data has been used to evaluate and reward faculty. Perhaps institutions that demonstrate that they use assessment data to evaluate faculty are strengthening relationships with external constituents such as state representatives.

There were five important variables that predicted whether student assessment information impacted faculty at baccalaureate institutions: the extent of administrative and governance activities offered; whether the assessment process had been evaluated; whether the mission statement emphasized assessment; whether assessment information was used in planning and reviewing academic programs and courses; and whether the institution had conducted studies linking student performance to institutional activities. It may be expected that institutions that offer regular activities on assessment would have greater faculty involvement. Furthermore, if assessment information is used to plan and review programs and courses, faculty will undoubtedly be affected by this assessment information. Finally, if, through their studies of students, institutions find links between student performance and faculty-student interactions—or some other faculty-oriented activity—faculty will likely be affected by these findings.

According to our results, students are more likely to be impacted by the assessment process if student affairs administrators and staff are trained in assessment. Perhaps students have more contact with these staff members. In addition, students are less likely to be affected by the assessment process if there is a centralized formal policy on student assessment at the institution.

It may be that in institutions with these policies, assessment data are both collected and distributed on an institution-wide basis, rather than allowing smaller individual units to collect and distribute their own data. If smaller units are in charge of assessing their own students, the students themselves may be more likely to receive feedback on their own assessments. Similarly, faculty in these smaller units may make changes to their curriculum based on assessment results which would also affect students.

9. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: RESEARCH RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for baccalaureate institutions based on the results of our research are outlined in this section. This study and monograph highlight the importance of viewing student assessment from a critical institutional perspective and underscore three important realities: 1) for student assessment to enhance student, faculty, academic, and institutional performance, it has to be viewed as an institutional process, not just a series of student assessment activities; 2) a great deal of organizational, administrative, and academic activity is or can be invested in initiating, managing, and using student assessment; and 3) that a systematic look at those institutional activities can enhance an institution's ability to plan for and use student assessment effectively.

Student Assessment: A Critical Institutional Perspective

The intent of our survey and of this monograph is to highlight the importance of viewing student assessment from a critical institutional perspective and to underscore three important realities: 1) for student assessment to enhance student, faculty, academic, and institutional performance, it has to be viewed as more than just a series of student assessment activities; 2) a great deal of organizational, administrative, and academic activity is or can be invested in initiating, managing, and using student assessment; and 3) a systematic look at those institutional activities can enhance an institution's ability to use student assessment effectively.

The data reported in this survey provide a national profile of what baccalaureate institutions are currently doing to support and promote the use of student assessment. This evidence provides insight into the activities institutions are doing extensively, those which merit greater attention, and those which make a difference in improving institutional performance. We begin with a summary of our research findings and recommendations concerning specific assessment activities conducted within baccalaureate institutions. Then we discuss how baccalaureate institutions can use the Institutional Support for Student Assessment (ISSA) inventory and the Framework for Institutional Support for Student Assessment (Figure 1 of this monograph) as a guide for examining their student assessment process and functions. We conclude by suggesting that the results of the national survey used in conjunction with institutional self-examination can serve as the basis for redesigning or planning a student assessment process which can enhance an institution's academic performance.

Student Assessment in Baccalaureate Institutions: Results and Recommendations from the National Survey

Institutions that have committed resources to assessing the development and performance of their undergraduate student assessment activities should be able to use the student assessment data they collect in organizational decision making and to document impacts from their assessment activities. Baccalaureate institutions that are engaging in student assessment, yet do not feel that they are benefiting from the process as much as they could be, may want to adopt the strategies of institutions that have reported using and being positively impacted by assessment information. Our research has demonstrated that most baccalaureate institutions have made only limited use of student assessment data and given little attention to monitoring their impacts. However, they have adopted a wide variety of student assessment approach measures, institution-wide activities supporting student assessment, and assessment management practices and policies. Our research identified strategies from the domains of student assessment approach, institution-wide support for student assessment, and assessment management practices and policies that are associated with baccalaureate institutions reaping greater institutional uses and impacts from undergraduate student

assessment. In the following sections, we highlight the student assessment activities that baccalaureate institutions are currently engaging in to a great extent, the activities that they may want to augment, and the activities that are critical to enhancing the use of student assessment data in academic decisions leading to positive institutional impacts.

Student Assessment Uses and Impacts

If institutions are benefiting from their student assessment process, they should report that they are using resulting assessment data in academic decisions and that the use of these data has a positive impact on both internal processes and external relationships. In this section, we describe the extent to which baccalaureate institutions are using student assessment data and the extent to which these data have had an impact on the institution. Suggestions for increasing institutional uses and impacts of student assessment data are outlined in the following sections.

Uses of Student Assessment Information. Most baccalaureate institutions are not using student assessment data to make academic decisions. Our study did not attempt to discern why institutions are not making more extensive use of these data. Perhaps institutional decision-makers do not have sufficient data to inform decisions concerning institutional policies and practices. If data collection focuses on student inputs (e.g., basic college-readiness skills) or outputs (e.g., graduation rates), without attempting to connect these inputs and outputs to institutional causes, decision makers may not be able to use this information to make changes. Assessment data use may also be limited if institutions have not created a formal mechanism for incorporating this data in decision making processes. Baccalaureate institutions should examine why they are not making more use of student assessment data. For example, is the type of data being collected not useful for informing decisions? Are there concerns about data quality? Is assessment data not easily accessible or not widely distributed to decision makers? Raising questions of this nature will assist institutions in understanding how they may increase the use of assessment information in decision making.

Impacts of Student Assessment Information. Similarly, baccalaureate institutions are reporting very minimal impacts from student assessment data. For the most part, we found that baccalaureate institutions are simply not monitoring whether student assessment information has had an impact on either their students, their faculty, or their relationships with external bodies. Such monitoring is important if institutions are to evaluate the institutional benefits of engaging in student assessment. Suggestions for increasing institutional uses and impacts of student assessment data are outlined in the following sections.

External Influences

External bodies, such as state legislators and accreditation associations, influence institutions to engage in student assessment. In addition, a variety of postsecondary organizations and external funding sources offer support for institutions' assessment programs. This section describes such influences on baccalaureate institutions and provides suggestions for deriving the most benefit from these external relationships.

State Influences. Most of the baccalaureate institutions that responded to our survey are private institutions and are not under the purview of a state mandate for student assessment. However, for those baccalaureate institutions that are subject to a state mandate, most have been involved in developing the mandate. However, some institutions were not involved in this development. Where such opportunities exist, institutions should try to be involved with such planning at the state level in order to craft mandates that are fair, practical, and beneficial to the institutions. According to our research, institutions located in states with strong assessment mandates emanating from both a policy and a legislative source are less likely to collect extensive student assessment data on former students. Institutions in these states may want to examine their

approaches to student assessment and determine whether they need to augment data collection activities for internal improvement purposes regardless of the state mandate requirements. Our research also found that baccalaureate institutions that report that they conduct assessment to meet state mandates are more likely to use their assessment data in making faculty-related decisions. Perhaps these states are requiring a link between assessment outcomes and faculty promotion.

Accreditation Influences. Although most baccalaureate institutions are not subject to a state mandate for student assessment, most have completed a regional accreditation review requiring undergraduate student assessment. For most baccalaureate institutions, accreditation requirements were either an important reason to initiate student assessment or an incentive to increase involvement in assessing students. Accreditation agencies apparently have a strong influence on baccalaureate institutions' student assessment activities. Some regional accreditation associations have more influence on institutions' student assessment activities than do others. For example, institutions in the Middle States accrediting region collect less student assessment data than do institutions in the North Central accrediting region. However, institutions in the North Central accrediting region are less likely to make use of student assessment data. To some extent, these differences reflect differences in the approach regional accreditors have taken toward student assessment. Institutions should be cognizant of the influences of their accrediting regions. While it is important to respond to accreditation requirements, baccalaureate institutions should also keep in mind that our research shows that if responding to accreditation requirements is the only major purpose for engaging in student assessment activities, these activities will not have an impact on the institution. That is, information collected and reported should be used not just to satisfy external reports and requirements but also for internal institutional improvement.

Other External Influences. In addition to state mandates and accreditation requirements, there are other externally-oriented considerations bearing on baccalaureate institutions' student assessment activities. Many baccalaureate institutions have made use of conferences and publications on student assessment provided by professional associations and regional accreditation associations. However, compared to all institutions in our study, baccalaureate institutions are less likely to receive state grants to help subsidize student assessment activities. While this difference is likely due to the predominance of private baccalaureate institutions in the study, those institutions that are under a state mandate for assessment could be more proactive in seeking state funding to help subsidize their assessment initiatives.

Institutional Approach to Student Assessment

Institutional approach to student assessment refers to institutional decisions regarding the collection and analysis of student assessment information. Dimensions along which assessment approaches can be differentiated include: the type and extent of student assessment data collected; the methods used to collect assessment data; and the analyses conducted and reported for collected data. Baccalaureate institutions have adopted a variety of approaches to collecting and analyzing student assessment data. This section describes these approaches and makes suggestions for adopting assessment approaches that will lead to institutional uses and impacts of student assessment information.

Type and Extent. Baccalaureate institutions are collecting student assessment data from many students on their basic college-readiness skills, their satisfaction with their institutional experiences, their academic intentions, and their academic progress. While collecting these data is important, they reflect a concern for student academic placement, student satisfaction, and movement through the educational process, rather than cognitive or affective learning or development. In order for baccalaureate institutions to understand how their students are learning and changing while in college, they should broaden their data collection efforts. Currently, baccalaureate institutions only collect a limited amount of data on higher order skills, vocational skills, and the civic and social roles taken on by former students. Collecting data on higher-order

skills, such as critical thinking and problem solving, would allow baccalaureate institutions to move beyond the accountability-oriented data they currently collect (e.g., how many students are satisfied, how many graduate, and how many go on to further their education) to the more substantive data of cognitive growth. Not only will collecting such data provide a richer understanding of student growth, but our research found that the more cognitive data baccalaureate institutions collect, the more likely they are to use assessment data in making faculty-related decisions and the more likely it is that assessment data will have an impact on institutions' external relationships.

Assessment Methods. When collecting student assessment data, baccalaureate institutions as a whole tend to use tests and other written instruments. However, some units within baccalaureate institutions appear to be more innovative in terms of the methods they use to collect student assessment data. Respondents report that some units use observations of student performance; student portfolios or comprehensive projects; student performance in capstone courses; student interviews or focus groups; employer interviews or focus groups; alumni interviews or focus groups; surveys or interview with withdrawing students; transcript analysis; and external examination of students. Baccalaureate institutions should increase the use of these alternative measures of collecting student assessment data in order to gather data that is not accessible via more traditional tests and surveys. Such alternative measures also tend to promote faculty involvement in assessment through participation in designing and administering these instruments, and interpreting the data collected through them. In addition to gaining a better understanding of student growth and strengthening faculty involvement, using a number of assessment methods will benefit the institution. Our research found that the more extensive the data collection methods an institution employs, in terms of using a greater number of instruments and tests and using more student-centered and external methods, the more likely institutions are to use assessment data in academic decision making.

Assessment Studies. Institutions in our study also reported whether they attempted to examine what aspects of the institution affect students' performance. Two-thirds of baccalaureate institutions do conduct such studies. The most frequently conducted studies examine admissions standards/policies and extra-curricular activities. The least frequently conducted studies are on classroom, library, and/or computing resources; exposure to different instructional or teaching methods; and patterns of student-faculty interaction. These latter types of studies are important as they attempt to discern faculty and teaching impacts on students' performance. Our research has found that institutions that conduct more studies report that their student assessment information has been useful in making educational decisions and that this information has had an impact on both faculty and students. Baccalaureate institutions should increase the number of studies they conduct.

Institution-Wide Assessment Support Strategy

Baccalaureate institutions have used a variety of organizational and administrative strategies to support their student assessment efforts, such as including student assessment within the academic mission; conducting assessment for internal improvement purposes; sponsoring institution-wide activities to promote involvement in and support for assessment; adopting an institutional plan or policy for student assessment; establishing processes and structures for planning and coordinating assessment; and evaluating the assessment process. This section summarizes such approaches adopted by baccalaureate institutions and offers recommendations regarding specific support strategies that enhance the likelihood of achieving institutional benefits from student assessment information.

Mission Emphasis. One way to determine the degree of institutional support for an activity is to examine whether the activity is emphasized in the mission statement. While most baccalaureate institutions emphasize excellence in undergraduate education and describe intended

outcomes for student assessment, less than one-fifth accentuate student assessment in their mission statements. If student assessment is indeed a core value of the institution, this value should be communicated via the mission statement. Our research found that institutions that emphasize assessment in their mission statements report that their student assessment information has had a positive impact on both faculty and their external relationships. Thus, leaders in these institutions should consider reviewing the content and emphasis of their academic mission and including explicit mention of student assessment if that does not currently exist.

Assessment Purposes. Similarly, support for assessment can be detected by understanding an institution's purpose for engaging in student assessment. Baccalaureate institutions report that accreditation mandates and improving both undergraduate programs and student performance are all very important purposes for engaging in assessment. This finding is encouraging as it indicates that institutions both are aware of external demands and are purposefully engaging in student assessment to improve internal processes. Baccalaureate institutions should continue to maintain such a balance, especially as our research found that institutions that conduct assessment for internal improvement purposes report that they collect more cognitive and affective data and that this assessment data is used in making educational decisions.

Institution-Wide Activities. Another measure of support for student assessment is the number of institution-wide administrative and governance activities used to promote assessment. Most baccalaureate respondents report that they have a faculty governance committee that regularly addresses assessment issues. Half of the respondents report that they provide regular workshops for academic and student affairs administrators. However, these institutions seldom provide incentives or rewards to administrators for engaging in or using the results of student assessment. Baccalaureate institutions could increase the use of internal accountability-oriented activities if they want to demonstrate institution-wide support for assessing students. Not only will offering such activities demonstrate support, but our research found that offering a plethora of administrative and governance activities is a positive predictor of collecting more cognitive and affective data and of these data having a positive impact on faculty members.

Administrative and Faculty Support. Our survey also asked the respondent to describe his or her opinion of the level of support for student assessment given by various internal constituents. Only academic affairs administrators were described as very supportive. Does this finding indicate a feeling of ambivalence toward assessing students? Even the chief executive officer was described, on average, as being only somewhat supportive of student assessment. If the chief executive officer is not very supportive of student assessment, there are bound to be difficulties in promoting it, funding it, and rewarding people for engaging in it. In addition, faculty governance was described as only somewhat supportive. This finding is also cause for concern. Our research found that the more supportive faculty and administrators are of student assessment, the more likely it is that the institution will use student assessment data to make faculty-related decisions. Periodically measuring degrees of internal support for student assessment may be a useful means for baccalaureate institutions to gauge the effectiveness of efforts to promote assessment.

Institutional Plans and Policies for Assessment. The types of plans and policies institutions develop for assessing students are telling of their support for student assessment. Virtually all responding baccalaureate institutions have some type of plan or policy for assessing students. The fact that they have plans and policies is encouraging as it indicates that they have devoted time and attention to the student assessment process. Half of baccalaureate institutions have developed a formal centralized plan that specifies assessment activities for all academic programs. The next most popular form is a formal decentralized policy that requires academic units or programs to develop their own assessment process. This form is followed in popularity by having a guidance policy that identifies institution-wide activities to be conducted by a central office or committee. Apparently baccalaureate institutions favor having some type of formal plan or policy regardless of whether it is centralized or decentralized. However, our research found that those institutions with

centralized policies report that their assessment results have less of an impact on students. Therefore, institutions may want to consider adopting decentralized policies in order to increase the likelihood that their assessment activities will impact students.

Planning and Coordinating Assessment. Most baccalaureate institutions have some type of planning group for student assessment. The majority of these groups are staffed by academic administrators and faculty members, with over half of the groups including an institutional researcher. Approximately one-third of these planning groups has a student representative. Baccalaureate institutions may want to consider increasing student involvement in these groups in order to understand how students feel about assessment. Once institutions understand how students view assessment, they can attempt to overcome student objections to participating in assessment activities. Most of the assessment planning groups are chaired by an academic administrator and approximately one-third of them are chaired by a faculty member. Similarly, the chief academic officer most often has approval authority for changing student assessment plans or policies, and an academic senate has such approval in half of the baccalaureate institutions surveyed. Compared to all institutions in our study, baccalaureate institutions are more likely to give an academic senate this approval authority. In terms of day-to-day operating responsibility, academic affairs officers, institutional researchers, and faculty members, in that order, are most likely to carry out day-to-day assessment activities. Whoever has this day-to-day operating responsibility most often reports to the chief academic officer.

Evaluation of Assessment Process. Whether an institution has evaluated its assessment plan or process is often an indication of the importance it accords to student assessment as an institutional activity. Approximately half of baccalaureate institutions have evaluated their plan or policy for student assessment. All baccalaureate institutions should consider evaluating their plans and policies, in order to better understand whether their plan is meeting its objectives and whether the effort expended to assess students is benefiting the institution. Furthermore, our research found that evaluating the assessment plan and process leads to positive impacts of assessment information on faculty, students, and external relationships.

Assessment Management Practices

Assessment management practices are intentionally devised by institutions to manage their student assessment efforts. The four specific areas of practice we examined are: academic resource allocation, student information systems, internal access to student information, and distribution of assessment reports and studies. This section summarizes the assessment management practices used by baccalaureate institutions and provides suggestions regarding practices that maximize institutional uses and impacts of student assessment information.

Academic Budget. Baccalaureate institutions as a whole are not allocating budgetary resources to academic units based on assessment engagement or results. If this practice was augmented, institutional leaders could demonstrate that they consider student assessment to be a high priority. However, our research found that allocating budgetary resources based on assessment engagement or results does not lead to positive impacts on faculty. It is likely that faculty members are not supportive of such budgetary practices.

Computer Support. Currently, fewer than half of baccalaureate institutions report that they have a student information system that tracks students from application through graduation. Even fewer have either a system which includes student performance indicators or an integrated database. Along with improving the management of student assessment data, creating relational databases with student assessment information that can be linked to other organizational data should facilitate studying the link between students' performance and their institutional interactions. Our research has found that institutions that conduct such studies report that their

student assessment information has been useful in making educational decisions and that this information has had an impact on both faculty and students.

Access to Assessment Information. Providing broad access to student assessment information is important if institutions want their constituents to make use of the information. Most baccalaureate institutions do provide internal access to student assessment information to senior academic administrators, institutional research professionals, department chairs, faculty advisors, and student affairs professionals. Our research found that providing such broad access to student assessment information increases the likelihood that this information will be used to make faculty-related decisions.

Assessment Report Distribution. Not only is providing access to information helpful in making use of assessment information, but distributing reports of studies done using student assessment data is also important. The more people are aware of student assessment activities and results, the more likely they will be to use the information in their own decision making. While most baccalaureate institutions regularly distribute reports to traditional internal constituents such as faculty, academic administrators, and student affairs professionals, hardly any regularly distribute reports to students, the general public, or employers. Baccalaureate institutions should increase the number of constituents who receive their reports in order to increase the likelihood that the assessment data will be useful.

Assessment Management Policies

Assessment management policies refer to institutional policies devised to both support student assessment and to direct the use of student assessment information. Five content dimensions of assessment management policies were examined: student involvement in assessment; professional development on assessment for faculty and academic administrators; training in assessment for student affairs personnel; faculty evaluation and rewards; and academic planning and review processes. This section summarizes the assessment management policies used by baccalaureate institutions and provides suggestions regarding policies that maximize institutional uses and impacts of student assessment information.

Student Involvement. While baccalaureate institutions report that many of their departments provide students with information about student assessment and require students to participate in assessment activities, they also report that only some departments provide students with feedback on their assessments. Providing individual feedback to students has the potential to help in improving their performance. Our research found that involving students in the assessment process led to greater use of assessment data in making educational decisions. If student involvement policies do not exist or do so only within a few departments, baccalaureate institutions should consider extending the breadth of these policies.

Professional Development. While policies supporting professional development opportunities appear to be somewhat prevalent in baccalaureate institutions, activities that do not affect faculty time spent in the classroom are more prevalent than those that take faculty away from the classroom, such as paid leaves and course reductions. Offering a greater variety of professional development opportunities should increase the level of involvement in student assessment and also increase the likelihood that constituents will understand how to use student assessment information. Our research found that those institutions that offer professional development are more likely to use assessment data to make educational decisions. Baccalaureate institutions should increase their use of professional development so that internal constituents will understand the applications of student assessment information.

Student Affairs Training. Baccalaureate institutions are less likely to have policies on providing assessment training to student affairs staff or administrators. When designing

professional development opportunities, baccalaureate institutions should not neglect these constituents. Involving student affairs staff in student assessment may lead to greater student involvement as the staff have opportunities for promoting assessment activities while they work with students. In fact, our research found that those institutions that provide student assessment training to their student affairs personnel are more likely to report that their assessment information has impacts on their students. They also report that they are more likely to use assessment information in making educational decisions.

Faculty Evaluation and Rewards. Baccalaureate institutions rarely have policies that include assessment-related criteria in faculty evaluation and rewards. However, our research found that institutions that use such data to evaluate and reward faculty report that they also use student assessment information in making educational decisions and that this information has had an impact on their external relations. Perhaps external bodies expect to see that assessment data is used to make decisions about faculty. Institutions may understandably be reluctant to tie faculty evaluation and rewards to assessment results or indicators of student performance, but there are other options to consider. For example, institutions can use other criteria such as faculty scholarship on assessment, evidence of using assessment to improve teaching and learning, or participation in student assessment decision making.

Academic Planning and Review. Another use for student assessment information is in planning and reviewing academic programs and courses. Most baccalaureate institutions are using student assessment information for this purpose. Our research found that institutions that use assessment information in academic planning and review are likely to report that their assessment information leads to positive impacts on faculty, students, and their external relationships. Those baccalaureate institutions that are not using assessment data in academic planning and review are encouraged to build in formal linkages between the analysis of student assessment data and specific internal decision making processes.

Inventorying the Institutional Student Assessment Process

Regardless of an institution's history of and support for student assessment, it is important to take stock of what the institution is currently doing. The Institutional Framework presented in section two (Figure 1 of this monograph) provides a comprehensive perspective for such an examination. The ISSA inventory included as Appendix A provides a useful quasi-objective instrument for identifying the specific dimensions and activities associated with the student assessment process.

Institutions are encouraged to identify a team of faculty and administrators most knowledgeable about and involved with student assessment to examine their institution's activities on all the dimensions in the ISSA inventory. While most items are objective (e.g., which types of measures are being used and how extensively), the actual pattern on campus may not be widely known. Other items are more subjective (e.g., purposes for conducting student assessment) and can provide the basis for good discussion.

This inventory of the institutional student assessment process then can be compared with national data for baccalaureate institutions which were presented in Appendix A and summarized in the previous sections of this monograph. This inventorying and comparison process may highlight activities, policies, and practices not currently used; identify areas needing greater attention; or focus on inconsistencies in patterns of activity (e.g. inconsistencies between stated purposes for student assessment and actual uses of student assessment data in academic decisions).

For institutions with an extensive history of involvement with student assessment, such an inventory may serve as a useful basis for identifying new activities to be undertaken, for improving their existing activities and processes, for identifying issues or controversies that have been

avoided, or for redesigning processes that may not be worth the current expenditure of effort and resources. For institutions with less experience with student assessment, the inventory may identify existing activities on which to build or help focus attention in the institution on the importance of student assessment in improving institutional performance. In either type of institution, the inventory and self evaluation process should help both to focus faculty and administrative attention on the importance of viewing student assessment as an institutional process and to deal with it more systematically — linking the various domains of activity with institutional improvement.

Planning for Student Assessment

Student assessment in most higher education institutions has emerged, often sporadically, over the past decade due to the need to respond to an accreditation self study, a new state mandate, an academic administrator who promoted it, a faculty group who embraced it for their unit, or an institutional researcher or program review officer who was engaged in studies of student performance. While, according to the data in this report, some institutions are beginning to develop a plan or policy for student assessment or create a group responsible for it, there is little evidence of systematic planning that links the student assessment approach to external demands and to internal institutional governance and management patterns; develops the organizational and administrative activities, practices, and policies to support it; and then uses the data for academic decisions and monitors their impact. Clearly there are significant institutional differences and complex issues to be addressed if student assessment is to have positive effects. These deserve some systematic, planned attention. The results of an institutional inventory can provide the basis for such an effort.

While we do not advocate a cookbook or standardized approach to planning for student assessment (each institution needs to design its own planning approach to reflect its own governance and leadership styles and traditions), the Institutional Framework (Figure 1 in section two) and the institutional inventory provide a useful basis for redesigning or planning a student assessment process. Using that self-assessment, the following are planning issues that need to be addressed:

External Influences

1. What is the nature of our state assessment process? How is it formulated and what are its requirements/implications for us?

2. What are the accreditation requirements for our institutional and key professional accreditation bodies?

3. What do some of our primary external constituents expect of our graduates?

4. What are sources of support (educational, financial, technical) for our student assessment efforts?

Institution-Wide Support Patterns

1. What emphasis is placed on student assessment in our mission statements? What are the intended purposes of our institution's assessment efforts?

2. What institution-wide administrative, governance, and academic activities support student assessment? Who are key leadership support groups and how are they involved?

3. What is the nature of our institution-wide plan or policy for student assessment? The role and membership of a coordinating or planning body? And the pattern of authority and responsibility for administering the process?

4. Is the student assessment process to be evaluated? By whom? Using what criteria?

Approaches to Student Assessment

1. Should we have an institution-wide or decentralized (by academic unit) approach to student assessment?

2. What types of measures are to be used? How widely? At what points in time?

3. What types of instruments and methods are appropriate? What technical or professional support does that require?

4. What studies of the influence of students' educationally related experiences on their performance are to be done? What reports of student performance are to be prepared and distributed?

Assessment Management Practices and Policies

1. What assessment management practices exist to guide student assessment? (e.g., resource allocation, information systems, data access, and report distribution practices.)

2. What institutional policies promote the use of student assessment? (e.g., policies on student involvement, professional development, student affairs training, faculty evaluation, and academic planning.)

Uses and Impacts of Student Assessment

1. How will we assure use of student assessment information on educationally- and faculty-related academic decisions?

2. How will we monitor the impact of student assessment on our students, faculty, academic and instructional patterns, and on our external relationships?

While planning for student assessment may not resolve all of these questions, they should be addressed as should issues of the balance between the effort and resources required to maintain the institution's student assessment process and the educational and institutional benefits. When planning is combined with inventorying, these two processes can become a powerful mechanism for understanding and improving institutional student assessment endeavors. Inventorying existing student assessment processes is a first step toward understanding the nature and extent of an institution's student assessment activities. This can be followed by a planning process that considers the recommendations for baccalaureate institutions that were presented in this section. Using a systematic planning approach should increase the likelihood that student assessment will contribute to improved institutional performance.

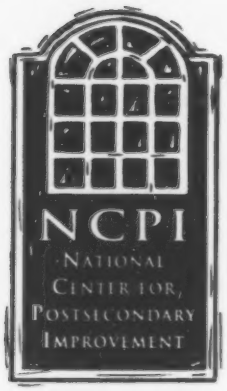
APPENDICES

Appendix A

Inventory of Institutional Support for Student Assessment for Baccalaureate Institutions

Inventory of Institutional Support for Student Assessment for Baccalaureate Institutions

For The Research Program on
Institutional Support for Student Assessment



NCPI - Project 5.2
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1259

An Introduction to the ISSA

The *Institutional Support for Student Assessment Inventory* (ISSA) was developed as part of a national research program examining the *Organizational and Administrative Support for Student Assessment* for the National Center for Postsecondary Improvement (NCPI). The ISSA is designed as an institutional inventory of the organizational and administrative practices that have been designed and implemented to support the use of *student assessment* on your campus.

Institutional Support Practices are those organized activities, policies, and procedures that your institution has intentionally designed to enhance the practice of student assessment. *Student Assessment refers to those activities focused on measuring dimensions of student performance other than traditional end of course grading.*

This national survey is designed to identify institutional support practices for undergraduate student assessment. The project also examines the factors influencing the adoption of various support practices and how those practices enhance the impact of student assessment for institutional improvement.

We understand that being selected for this survey will require a commitment of time to complete and we appreciate your involvement. This instrument is also intended as an institutional self-assessment inventory to facilitate examination of your institution's own organizational and administrative practices which support student assessment. We encourage each institution to use the survey in this manner. You will receive a summary report of survey responses to all compare with your own institutional profile.

Completing the ISSA

The main purpose is to obtain a profile of your institution's current approach to undergraduate student assessment and its support practices. The inventory may be completed by one individual or group of individuals who are most familiar with the patterns of undergraduate student assessment on your campus. It should take less than one hour to complete.

- Please keep in mind that the questions refer to *undergraduate education* at your institution.
- Respond to each item in the questionnaire to the best of your knowledge.

The questionnaire is coded to allow follow up only. Individual institutions will not be identified in any analyses or reports.

Return the completed questionnaire in the enclosed return envelope. Any questions concerning the survey can be addressed to the following:

National Center for Postsecondary Improvement Project 5.2
School of Education
University of Michigan
610 E. University, Room 2339
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1259
Phone: 734-647-2464
Fax: 734-936-2741
Email: ncpi.proj52@umich.edu

Marvin W. Peterson, Project Director

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I. Institutional Approach to Student Assessment

A. Type, Extent and Timing of Student Assessment

We are interested in your institution's routine practices of collecting different types of undergraduate student performance data, the extent to which they are collected, and when they are collected. For each of the following content types of undergraduate student performance data:

1) indicate the extent to which each type is collected
2) for each type of data collected, check whether it is collected at entry, during enrollment, at exit, or a combination of these data collection points.

Type	Extent				Timing		
Currently Enrolled Students	Not Collected	Collected for some students	Collected for many students	Collected for all students	Collected at entry	Collected while enrolled	Collected at exit
	(circle one number for each item)				(check all that apply for each item)		
	1	2	3	4			
		BAC	All				
1. Student academic intentions or expectations		**3.33**	3.25		___	___	___
2. Basic college-readiness skills (reading, writing, mathematics, etc.)		**3.35**	3.44		___	___	___
3. Higher-order skills (critical thinking, problem solving)		**2.41***	2.10		___	___	___
4. General education competencies		**2.76**	2.55		___	___	___
5. Competence in major field of study (discipline- or program-specific knowledge)		**2.92***	2.60		___	___	___
6. Vocational or professional skills		**1.97**	2.11		___	___	___
7. Personal growth and affective development (values, attitudes, social development, etc.)		**2.51***	2.12		___	___	___
8. Student experiences and involvement with institution		**2.79**	2.57		___	___	___
9. Student satisfaction with institution		**3.13**	2.96		___	___	___
10. Student academic progress (retention, graduation rates)		**3.87**	3.76				
Former Students							
11. Vocational or professional outcomes (career goals, job attainment or performance)		**2.74**	2.72				
12. Further education (transfer, degree attainment, graduate study)		**2.74**	2.69				
13. Civic or social roles (political, social or community involvement)		**2.26***	1.80				
14. Satisfaction and experiences with institution after leaving		**2.63**	2.63				

B. Student Assessment Instruments

Does your institution employ institutionally or externally developed instruments or tests for the following types of undergraduate student assessment information? (circle all that apply for each item):

Content of Instrument	Source of Instrument: Not used 1	Institutionally developed 2	State provided 3	Commercially available 4
1. Student plans, goals, or expectations	**BAC: 21%**	**46%**	**0.3%**	**42%***
	All: 21%	51%	4%	32%
2. Basic college-readiness skills (reading, writing, mathematics, etc.)	**BAC: 12%**	**50%***	**3%**	**58%**
	All: 6%	38%	11%	67%
3. Higher-order skills (critical thinking, problem solving)	**BAC: 39%**	**30%**	**2%**	**37%**
	All: 42%	29%	2%	32%
4. General education competencies	**BAC: 28%**	**45%**	**7%**	**37%**
	All: 32%	40%	5%	33%
5. Competence in major field of study (discipline- or program-specific knowledge)	**BAC: 11%**	**74%***	**9%**	**51%***
	All: 19%	64%	12%	39%
6. Vocational or professional skills (excluding licensure exams)	**BAC: 43%**	**33%***	**15%**	**23%**
	All: 34%	43%	14%	25%
7. Personal growth and affective development (values, attitudes, social development, etc.)	**BAC: 27%***	**48%**	**2%**	**41%**
	All: 38%	39%	2%	30%
8. Student effort, experiences or involvement with institution	**BAC: 16%**	**66%**	**1%**	**35%***
	All: 21%	60%	4%	24%
9. Student satisfaction with institution	**BAC: 6%**	**72%**	**3%**	**43%**
	All: 4%	73%	8%	35%
10. Alumni satisfaction and experiences	**BAC: 7%**	**81%**	**7%**	**23%**
	All: 10%	78%	8%	15%

C. Other Student Assessment Methods

To what extent does your institution use the following methods to collect undergraduate student assessment information? (circle one number for each item):

Other Student Assessment Methods	Not used 1	Used in some units* 2	Used in most units 3	Used in all units 4
		BAC	All	
1. Observations of student performance (simulations, demonstrations, lab)		**2.34**	2.26	
2. Student portfolios or comprehensive projects		**2.29**	2.10	
3. Student performance in capstone courses		**2.50***	2.15	
4. Student interviews or focus groups		**1.96**	1.84	
5. Transcript analysis		**2.24**	2.16	
6. External examination of students (licensure exams, external reviewers)		**1.98**	2.02	
7. Special surveys of or interviews with withdrawing students		**2.78***	2.40	
8. Alumni interviews or focus groups		**1.95**	1.90	
9. Employer interviews or focus groups		**1.66**	1.87	

D. Student Sub-Populations

Does your institution use different assessment methods for the following sub-populations of undergraduate students? (check one for each item):

		Different		Same as Other Students
		BAC	All	
1.	Adult students	**17%**	10%	_____
2.	Part-time students	**7%**	5%	_____
3.	Minority students	**1%**	2%	_____
4.	Distance education students	**22%**	22%	_____

* "Unit" refers to academic areas such as departments, divisions, schools, or colleges.

E. Student Assessment Studies

Does your institution conduct studies of the *relationship between* the following experiences and students' performance (check all that apply):

	BAC	All
1. Student course-taking patterns	**23%**	26%
2. Exposure to different instructional or teaching methods	**16%**	21%
3. Patterns of student-faculty interaction	**16%**	14%
4. Extra-curricular activities	**30%**	24%
5. Residence arrangements	**27%**	21%
6. Student financial aid and/or concurrent employment	**27%**	30%
7. Admission standards or policies	**50%**	42%
8. Academic advising patterns	**27%**	26%
9. Classroom, library and/or computing resources	**17%**	17%
10. Do not study the relationship between the above experiences and student performance	**34%**	38%

F. Student Performance Profiles or Reports

Does your institution provide profiles or reports of appropriate student performance information at the following levels of aggregation (check all that apply):

	BAC	All
1. Institution wide	**69%**	69%
2. Schools or colleges	**19%***	31%
3. Academic programs or departments	**64%**	65%
4. Special populations or subgroups/students	**37%**	46%
5. By course or groups of courses	**29%**	36%
6. Do not provide any reports	**9%**	11%

II. Institutional Support for Student Assessment

A. Institutional Emphasis

1. Your institutional mission statement explicitly (check all that apply):

	BAC	All
a. emphasizes excellence in undergraduate education as an institutional priority	**88%**	82%
b. identifies the educational outcomes intended for your students	**61%**	52%
c. refers to student assessment as an important institutional activity	**16%**	19%
d. does not explicitly mention any of the above	**7%**	11%

2. For how many years has your institution engaged in student assessment? _____

B. Purpose of Student Assessment

The following are often intended purposes of an institution's undergraduate student assessment process. Please rate the importance of each for your institution. (circle one number for each item):

Purpose	No Importance 1	Minor Importance 2	Moderate Importance 3	Very Important 4
		BAC	All	
1. Preparing institutional self-study for accreditation		**3.63**	3.86	
2. Meeting state reporting requirements		**2.30***	2.89	
3. Guiding internal resource allocation decisions		**2.62**	2.71	
4. Guiding undergraduate academic program improvement		**3.51**	3.43	
5. Improving the achievement of undergraduate students		**3.47**	3.48	
6. Improving faculty instructional performance		**3.08**	3.02	
7. Other (briefly describe): _____				

C. Administrative and Governance Activities

Institutions have introduced a variety of administrative or governance activities that address or promote student assessment. Does your institution engage in any of the following activities? (check all that apply):

		BAC	All
1.	Annual presidential or other institution-wide initiatives, forums or seminars on assessment	**33%**	41%
2.	Rewards or incentives for academic and student affairs administrators who promote use of student assessment in their unit	**6%**	6%
3.	Incentives for academic units to use student assessment information in their evaluation and improvement efforts	**25%**	27%
4.	Student assessment workshops for academic and student affairs administrators	**49%**	56%
5.	Board of trustees committee that addresses student assessment	**14%**	13%
6.	Faculty governance committee that addresses student assessment issues	**69%***	58%
7.	Student representation on student assessment committees	**37%**	33%

D. Support for Student Assessment

Use the scale below to rate the degree to which various groups within your institution support undergraduate student assessment activities (circle one number for each item):

	Very Unsupportive 1	Somewhat Unsupportive 2	Neutral, Unknown 3	Supportive 4	Very Supportive 5
		BAC	ALL		
1. Board of trustees		**3.79**	3.84		
2. Chief executive officer		**4.39**	4.41		
3. Academic affairs administrators		**4.69**	4.64		
4. Student affairs administrators		**4.33**	4.33		
5. Faculty governance		**3.83**	3.80		
6. Students		**3.33**	3.33		

E. Planning and Coordinating Student Assessment

1. Which of the following best describes your institution's *plan or policy* for undergraduate student assessment? Your institution (check all that apply):

	BAC	All
a. has a formally adopted institutional plan or policy requiring specified undergraduate student assessment activities of all academic units or programs	**55%**	50%
b. has a formally adopted plan or policy for undergraduate student assessment in some academic units or program areas (e.g. general education or academic majors)	**14%**	19%
c. has a formally adopted institutional plan or policy requiring all academic units or programs to develop their own undergraduate student assessment plan	**46%**	39%
d. has a formally adopted institutional plan or policy stipulating institution-wide activities to be conducted by a central committee, office, or officer	**40%**	38%
e. has no formal plan or policy but academic units or programs are encouraged to conduct their own undergraduate student assessment activities	**14%**	13%
f. is currently developing a plan or policy for undergraduate student assessment	**17%**	17%
g. does not have an undergraduate student assessment plan or policy (SKIP TO E-6)	**2%**	4%

2. Is there an *institution-wide group* (committee, task force, etc.) that is primarily responsible for *ongoing planning and policy setting* for undergraduate student assessment? (check one):

		BAC	All
a.	yes	**73%**	70%
b.	no (SKIP TO QUESTION E-5)		

3. If yes, who serves on this group? (check all that apply):

		BAC	All
a.	Chief executive officer	12%	13%
b.	Academic affairs administrator(s)/staff	85%	86%
c.	Student affairs administrator(s)/staff	40%	54%
d.	Institutional research administrator(s)/staff	53%	61%
e.	Academic review and evaluation administrator(s)/staff	20%	24%
f.	Student assessment administrator(s)/staff	22%*	32%
g.	Faculty	90%	91%
h.	Students	38%	33%
i.	Other _____	15%	12%

4. Who has *executive responsibility* for or who *chairs* the institution-wide group responsible for the ongoing planning or policy-setting process for undergraduate student assessment? (check all that apply):

		BAC	All
a.	Academic affairs administrator	60%	55%
b.	Student affairs administrator	3%	7%
c.	Institutional research officer	19%	18%
d.	Academic review and evaluation officer	5%	5%
e.	Student assessment officer (if separate)	10%	8%
f.	Faculty member	28%	31%
g.	Other _____	7%	11%

5. Who *approves* any changes in your institution's plan or policies for undergraduate student assessment? (check all that apply):

		BAC	All
a.	Board of trustees	12%	17%
b.	Chief executive officer	40%	45%
c.	Chief academic affairs officer	76%	75%
d.	Chief student affairs officer	13%	20%
e.	Institutional research officer	21%	18%
f.	Academic review and evaluation officer	7%	8%
g.	Student assessment officer	9%	10%
j.	Student government	0.3%	1%
h.	Academic senate or other faculty committee(s)	52%*	39%
i.	Faculty union	7%	4%
k.	Other _____	15%	14%

6. Who has *operational* responsibility for your institution's day-to-day undergraduate student assessment activities (e.g., instrument development, data collection, analysis, and reporting)? (check all that apply):

		BAC	All
a.	Academic affairs administrator	54%	45%
b.	Student affairs administrator	14%	20%
c.	Institutional research officer	42%	45%
d.	Academic review and evaluation officer	10%	9%
e.	Student assessment officer	13%	15%
f.	Faculty member(s)	39%	33%
g.	Other _____	10%	13%
h.	No one (SKIP TO QUESTION E8)	3%	3%

7. To whom does the individual with operational responsibility for day-to-day student assessment activities directly report? (check one):

		BAC	All
a.	Chief executive officer	28%	29%
b.	Chief academic officer	66%*	56%
c.	Chief student affairs officer	2%	7%
d.	Institutional research officer	2%	3%
e.	Academic review and evaluation officer	2%	2%
f.	Other _____	6%	10%

8. Is there an office which provides faculty consultation in using student assessment for instructional improvement or curriculum development? (check one):

		BAC	All
a.	yes	41%	47%
b.	no	59%	53%

9. If yes, what is the name of the office?_____

F. Evaluating Your Institution's Student Assessment Plan or Process

1. Has your institution evaluated its undergraduate student assessment process? (check one):

		BAC	All
a.	yes, with a formal evaluation	21%	22%
b.	yes, with an informal evaluation	26%	27%
c.	currently developing evaluation plans (SKIP TO SECTION III)	33%	29%
d.	not currently evaluating or planning to evaluate assessment process (SKIP TO SECTION)	21%	21%

2. In evaluating your institution's student assessment process, which of the following elements of that process were reviewed? (check all that apply):

		BAC	All
a.	your student assessment plan and policies	90%	81%
b.	the structure and responsibility for student assessment	73%	64%
c.	achievement of your institution's intended objectives for student assessment	76%	70%
d.	reliability and validity of student assessment instruments and methods	52%	54%
e.	quality of data analysis	55%	51%
f.	use of student assessment information in institutional decision-making	73%	66%
g.	the problems encountered while conducting student assessment activities	74%	69%
h.	comparison of the costs and benefits of student assessment	31%	22%

III. External Influences on Institutional Student Assessment Activities

A. State Role (FOR STATE-FUNDED INSTITUTIONS ONLY; ALL OTHERS SKIP TO QUESTION III. B-1)

1. Was your state's plan/requirement for student assessment primarily developed (check one)):

	BAC	All
a. by state-level officials	**5%***	16%
b. through joint consultation between state officials and institutional representatives	**24%***	39%
c. no statewide plan or requirement for student assessment exists (SKIP TO III. B-1)	**71%***	46%

2. State requirements for student assessment (check all that apply):

	BAC	All
a. were an important reason for your institution to initiate undergraduate student assessment	**30%***	45%
b. have increased your institution's involvement in undergraduate student assessment	**42%***	62%
c. have not been a factor in your institution's undergraduate student assessment activities	**47%***	22%
d. have been a negative influence on your institution's undergraduate student assessment activities	**0%**	4%

3. Your state's reporting requirements include (check all that apply):

	BAC	All
a. evidence that a student assessment plan is in place	**88%***	68%
b. measurement of state-mandated student performance indicators	**56%**	64%
c. institutionally-devised student performance indicators	**59%***	49%
d. evidence of institutional use of student assessment information	**74%***	52%

4. How has your state higher education agency reviewed or evaluated your institution's undergraduate student assessment plan or process after it was implemented? (check all that apply):

	BAC	All
a. reviewed by state officials	**45%**	42%
b. reviewed using external reviewers	**8%**	16%
c. required an institutional self-review	**23%**	24%
d. no post hoc review has occurred (SKIP TO QUESTION B-1)	**50%**	44%

5. The state review of your institution's undergraduate student assessment plan or process included (check all that apply):

	BAC	All
a. review of your institution's student assessment process itself	**76%**	67%
b. comparison of your institution's student performance record with your past performance	**43%**	44%
c. comparison of your institution's student performance record with peer institutions	**14%***	36%
d. comparison of your institution's student performance record with institutions in your state	**29%**	38%
e. other (briefly describe) _____	**24%***	10%

B. Regional Accrediting Role in Student Assessment

1. Has your institution gone through a regional self study accreditation review which required undergraduate student assessment? (check one):

		BAC	All
a.	yes	81%	80%
b.	no	19%*	29%

2. Regional accreditation agency requirements for undergraduate student assessment (check all that apply):

		BAC	All
a.	were an important reason for your institution to initiate undergraduate student assessment	65%	64%
b.	have increased your institution's involvement in undergraduate student assessment	85%	79%
c.	have not been a factor in your institution's undergraduate student assessment activities	8%	12%
d.	have had a negative influence on your institution's undergraduate std. assessment activities	0.3%	0.9%

3. Your institution's regional accreditation agency requires (check all that apply):

		BAC	All
a.	evidence that a student assessment plan or process is in place	92%	90%
b.	intended institutional uses of student assessment information	75%	73%
c.	results of student assessment	66%	66%
d.	evidence of actual institutional use of student assessment information	79%	77%
e.	unfamiliar with regional accreditation requirements for student assessment	4%	5%

C. External Sources of Support for Assessment

1. Has your institution received external grants to improve undergraduate student assessment practices from any of the following? (check all that apply):

		BAC	All
a.	FIPSE	8%	6%
b.	other federal agencies (please identify): _____	5%	7%
c.	a state incentive program	3%	7%
d.	private foundations or corporate sources (please identify): _____	11%	6%
e.	no known external grants received	79%	79%

2. Has your institution used any of the following student assessment services offered by the following postsecondary organizations? (check all services that apply for each type of organization):

	Student Assessment Service Used				
Type of Postsecondary Organization	Not used or not available	Consultation services	Assessment conferences	Training workshops	Publications or research reports
a. Professional associations (Institutional, disciplinary, or administrative)	**BAC: 30%**	**11%**	**52%**	**30%**	**50%**
	All: 29%	13%	51%	32%	51%
b. Regional accrediting association	**BAC: 26%**	**17%**	**44%**	**33%**	**44%**
	All: 30%	19%	41%	32%	45%
c. State-level agency	**BAC:67%***	**11%**	**15%***	**14%**	**18%**
	All: 54%	14%	26%	22%	22%
d. Consortium of institutions	**BAC: 48%**	**17%**	**36%**	**19%**	**27%**
	All: 53%	13%	30%	18%	20%

IV. Academic Management Policies and Practices for Student Assessment

Institutions have a wide array of formally organized policies, activities, and procedures intended to enhance or support the collection and use of undergraduate student assessment information. The following policies and practices have been identified in many institutions.

FOR QUESTIONS A THROUGH D, INDICATE WHETHER THE FOLLOWING POLICIES OR PRACTICES EXIST AT YOUR INSTITUTION.

A. Resource Allocation for Student Assessment (check all that apply):

	BAC	All
1. An explicit operating budget allocation is made to support student assessment.	57%	49%
2. An academic budget process that considers student performance indicators in resource allocation to academic units.	15%	23%
3. An academic budget process that compares academic units on student performance indicators and allocates resources competitively.	2%	2%
4. An academic budget process that rewards academic units for improvement based on their own past student performance indicators.	3%	3%

B. Student Assessment Information System (check all that apply):

	BAC	All
1. Key student assessment activities have been scheduled into the academic calendar.	64%	57%
2. A computerized student information system which includes student performance indicators.	19%	28%
3. Student information system tracks individual students from application through graduation.	40%	42%
4. Student assessment database integrated with faculty, curricular, and financial databases.	8 %	10%

C. Access to Individual Student Assessment Information (check all that apply):

Student assessment information on individual students is available to:

	BAC	All
1. Institutional research, assessment or evaluation professionals	72%	76%
2. Senior academic administrators	75%	72%
3. Department chairs or academic program administrators	71%	73%
4. Student affairs professionals	51%	58%
5. Faculty advisors	66%	66%

D. Distribution of Student Assessment Reports and Studies (check all that apply):

Student assessment reports and studies or appropriate summaries are regularly distributed to:

	BAC	All
1. Students	20%	19%
2. Faculty	71%	67%
3. Academic administrators	91%	86%
4. Student affairs professionals	51%	58%
5. Employers	2%	5%
6. The general public	7%	8%

FOR QUESTIONS E THROUGH H, USE THE FOLLOWING SCALE TO INDICATE THE EXTENT TO WHICH EACH OF THE FOLLOWING POLICIES AND PRACTICES EXIST AT YOUR INSTITUTION (Circle one number for each item).

E. Student Policies on Student Assessment	Not done at all 1	Done in a few depts. 2	Done in some depts. 3	Done in many depts. 4	Done in most depts. 5
		BAC		All	
1. Students are required to participate in student assessment activities		4.02		3.77	
2. Incentives are provided to encourage students to participate in student assessment activities		2.06		1.87	
3. Information regarding the purpose and uses of student assessment is provided to students		3.72		3.52	
4. Students are provided with individual feedback regarding their own student performance results		3.25		3.21	

F. Professional Development

	BAC	All
1. Faculty are required to learn about or receive training on student assessment	2.48	2.47
2. Funds for faculty to attend or present at professional conferences on student assessment are available	3.08	3.08
3. Workshops, seminars, or consultative services for faculty on the use of student assessment in course design or instruction are offered	2.71	2.90
4. Assistance for faculty in the form of paid leaves, stipends, mini grants or course reduction to improve use of student assessment is provided	1.89	2.00
5. Workshops and seminars for department chairs, deans, and other academic administrators to improve use of student assessment in their unit is provided	2.39	2.55
6. Student affairs staff are required to learn about or receive training related to student assessment	1.94	2.22
7. Student assessment workshops for student affairs administrators are provided	1.87*	2.22

G. Faculty Evaluation and Rewards

	BAC	All
1. Faculty evaluation for promotion considers evidence of student performance in their classes (not just student teaching evaluation)	2.05	1.84
2. Faculty evaluation for annual salary and merit increases incorporates evidence of student performance	1.67	1.56
3. Faculty scholarship on or innovative uses of student assessment is considered in promotion, tenure, or salary reviews	2.27	2.01
4. Faculty willingness to use or to participate in student assessment activities is considered in faculty promotion, tenure, or salary reviews	2.35*	1.99
5. Faculty receive public recognition or awards for innovative or effective use of student assessment	1.58	1.58
6. Faculty hiring process considers experience or skill in student assessment	1.66	1.68
7. Faculty are encouraged to assess student learning in their classes	4.12	3.99

H. Academic Planning and Review	Not done at all 1	Done in a few depts. 2	Done in some depts. 3	Done in many depts. 4	Done in most depts. 5
Your institution incorporates student performance data into the following processes:					
		BAC		All	
1. Academic department or undergraduate program planning or review		**3.72**		3.67	
2. General education or core curriculum review		**3.72**		3.55	
3. Course-level review and development		**3.28**		3.36	
4. Review and planning for student academic support services		**3.07**		3.09	

V. Impacts of Student Assessment

A. Decision Making

To what extent has the use of information available from your undergraduate student assessment process influenced the following actions? (circle one number for each item):

Institutional Actions	No action or influence unknown 1	Action taken, data not influential 2	Action taken, data somewhat influential 3	Action taken, data very influential 4
		BAC	All	
1. Revising your undergraduate academic mission or goals		**2.09**	2.06	
2. Designing or reorganizing academic programs or majors		**2.61**	2.54	
3. Designing or reorganizing student affairs units		**1.93**	1.91	
4. Allocating resources to academic units		**1.77**	1.81	
5. Modifying student assessment plans, policies, or processes		**1.55***	2.61	
6. Deciding faculty promotion and tenure		**1.70**	1.46	
7. Deciding faculty salary increases or rewards (release time, travel funds, etc.)		**1.49**	1.39	
8. Revising or modifying general education curriculum		**2.57**	2.47	
9. Creating or modifying student out- of-class learning experiences (e.g. internships, service learning)		**2.34**	2.14	
10. Creating or modifying distance learning initiatives		**1.52**	1.72	
11. Modifying instructional or teaching methods		**2.43**	2.47	
12. Modifying student academic support services (e.g. advising, tutoring)		**2.49**	2.56	

B. Institutional Impacts

Have you monitored the following institutional indicators and been able to document the impact of student assessment information on them? (circle one number for each item):

Internal Impacts	Not monitored, do not know 1	Monitored, negative impact 2	Monitored, no known impact 3	Monitored, positive impact 4
		BAC	All	
1. Affected campus discussions of undergraduate education		**2.57**	2.28	
2. Contributed to faculty satisfaction		**1.88**	1.69	
3. Contributed to faculty interest in teaching		**1.98**	1.88	
4. Led to changes in instructional or teaching methods used		**2.60**	2.45	
5. Contributed to student satisfaction		**2.11**	2.03	
6. Affected student retention or graduation rates		**2.26**	2.20	
7. Affected student grade performance		**1.91**	1.95	
8. Affected student achievement on external examinations (e.g. professional licensure, GRE)		**1.99**	1.97	
External Impacts				
		BAC	All	
9. Affected student applications or student acceptance rates		**1.63**	1.48	
10. Affected allocation or share of state funding		**1.24**	1.46	
11. Affected evaluation from regional accreditation agency		**2.57**	2.55	
12. Affected private fund-raising results		**1.65**	1.42	
13. Affected success on grant applications		**1.75**	1.65	
14. Affected communication with external constituents		**1.87**	1.75	
15. Affected institutional reputation or image		**2.04**	1.94	

Note: * denotes difference greater than or equal to .3 or 10% from average of all institutions.

VI. Further Studies - Optional

This page will be removed from the questionnaire before it is processed and completion of it is optional. However, we would like to know more about your institution's experience with student assessment and we would like to be able to respond to you personally with a follow up report.

Within the next year several institutions will be invited to participate in a more intensive study of the impacts of their student assessment practices and policies. Would you be interested in participating in a case study?

__ yes
__ possibly
__ no

If you are interested, we would appreciate any additional information regarding your student assessment practices that you believe would be of interest to other institutions. If you believe your approach to student assessment or its impacts are unusual, please describe it briefly (or enclose a report you think captures your experience).

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please provide your name and address if you are interested in receiving a personal summary report of this survey.

Name: _____

Title: _____

Institution: _____

Address: _____

_____

_____

Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this instrument.

Appendix B

Construction and Content of Variables

Variable	Definition
Institutional Characteristics	
Enrollment	Single item. Reflects number of students enrolled in institution. Data from 1995 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).
Control	Single item. (1 = public; 0 = private). Data from IPEDS.
Institutional type	Four dummy-coded single items. Reflects the institution's carnegie type. (Associate of Arts, Baccalaureate, Doctoral, and Research. Master's institutions was the omitted category.) Data from IPEDS.
External Influences on Student Assessment	
State initiative	Single item. Reflects whether the state's assessment initiatives were guided by legislative or other means (1 = no state plan; 2 = state policy; 3 = state statute; 4 = combination of policy & statute). Data from SAS.
State approach	Single item. Reflects whether states mandate common indicators and outcomes (1 = no indicators or outcomes; 2 = institutional specific; 3 = common for some; 4 = common for all). Data from SAS.
Accrediting association	Five dummy-coded single items. Reflects the institution's regional accreditation association membership (Middle States; North Central; New England; Southern; Western. Northwest region was the omitted region). Data from IPEDS.
Development of state plan	Single item. (III A 1) Reflects how state plan for student assessment was primarily developed (1 = state; 2 = joint consultation between state and institution; 3 = no state plan or requirement).
State influence	Four single items. (III A 2 a-d) Reflect the influence of state requirements on the institutions assessment activities: a = important reason to initiate student assessment; b = increased institution's involvement in assessment; c = have not been a factor in assessment activities; d = have been negative influence on assessment activities (1 = yes; 0 = no).
State reporting requirements	Four single items. (III A 3 a-d) Reflect the state's reporting requirements: a = evidence that assessment plan is in place; b = measurement of state mandated indicators; c = use of institutionally devised indicators; d = evidence of institutional use of assessment information (1 = yes; 0 = no).
State review methods	Four single items. (III A 4 a-d) Reflect the method used by state to review the institutions assessment activities: a = reviewed by state officials; b = reviewed using external reviewers; c = required institutional self-review; d = no review occurred (1 = yes; 0 = no).
State review criteria	Five single items. (III A 5 a-e) Reflect the processes included in the state review of the institutions assessment activities: a = review of institutions process itself; b = compare student performance record with past record; c = compare student performance record with peer institutions; d = compare student performance record with other in state; e = other (1 = yes; 0 = no).

Variable	Definition
Accrediting influence	Four single items. (III B 2 a-d) Reflect the influence of regional accreditation agency requirements on the institutions assessment activities: a = important reason to initiate student assessment; b = increased institution's involvement in assessment; c = have not been a factor in assessment activities; d = have been negative influence on assessment activities (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Accrediting reporting requirements	Five single items. (III B 3 a-e) Reflect the regional accreditation agency reporting requirements: a = evidence that assessment plan is in place; b = intended uses of assessment information; c = results of assessment; d = evidence of actual institutional use of assessment information; e = unfamiliar with regional accreditation requirements (1 = yes; 0 = no).
External sources of support	Five single items. (III C 1 a-e) Reflect the sources of support received to improve student assessment practices: a = FIPSE; b = other federal agencies; c = state incentive program; d = private foundation or corporate source; e = no known external grants (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Use of external services	Four single items. (III C 2 a-d) Reflect the use of services offered by each of the following type of postsecondary organization: a = professional associations; b = regional accrediting association; c = state-level agency; d = consortium of institutions. Respondants could choose from the following services offered by each organization: organization not used or not available; consultation services; assessment conferences; training workshops; publications or research reports (1 = used; 0 = not used).
Institutional Approach to Student Assessment	
Academic intentions	Single item. (I A 1) Reflects extent to which institutions collect data on current student's academic intentions or expectations (1 = not collected; 2 = collected for some students; 3 = collected for many students; 4 = collected for all students).
Basic college-readiness skills	Single item. (I A 2) Reflects extent to which institutions collect data on current student's college-readiness skills (1 = not collected; 2 = collected for some students; 3 = collected for many students; 4 = collected for all students).
Cognitive assessment	Four item factorially-derived scale. (I A 3-6) Reflects the extent to which institutions collect data on current students' cognitive performance: competence in major field; general education competencies; higher-order cognitive skills; vocational or professional skills (1 = not collected; 2 = collected for some students; 3 = collected for many students; 4 = collected for all students). Cronbach alpha = .71.
Affective assessment	Three item factorially-derived scale. (I A 7-9) Reflects the extent to which institutions collect data on current students' affective development and satisfaction: experiences and involvement with institution; satisfaction with institution; personal growth and affective development (1 = not collected; 2 = collected for some students; 3 = collected for many students; 4 = collected for all students). Cronbach alpha = .68.
Academic progress	Single item. (I A 10) Reflects extent to which institutions collect data on current student's academic progress (1 = not collected; 2 = collected for some students; 3 = collected for many students; 4 = collected for all students).

Variable	Definition
Post-college assessment	Three item factorially-derived scale. (I A 11,12,14) Reflects the extent to which institutions collect data from former students: vocational or professional outcomes; further education; satisfaction and experiences with institution after leaving (1 = not collected; 2 = collected for some students; 3 = collected for many students; 4 = collected for all students). Cronbach alpha = .83.
Civic/social roles	Single item. (I A 13) Reflects extent to which institutions collect data on former student's civic or social roles in the community (1 = not collected; 2 = collected for some students; 3 = collected for many students; 4 = collected for all students).
Timing of data collection	Nine item additive index. (I A 1-9) Reflects when institutions collect data (1 = not collected; 2 = collected at one point in time; 3 = collected at entry and while enrolled, or while enrolled and at exit; 4 = collected at entry and at exit; 5 = collected at entry, while enrolled, and at exit).
Number of instruments	Nine item additive index. (I B 1-9) Reflects student assessment instruments (institutionally developed, state provided, and commercially available) used by institution to collect ten types of assessment information: student plans or expectations; basic college-readiness skills; higher-order cognitive skills; general education competencies; competence in major; vocational or professional skills; personal growth and affective development; experiences or involvement with institution; satisfaction with institution (1 = instrument used; 0 = instrument not used).
Student-centered methods	Four item factorially-derived scale. (I C 1-4) Reflects the extent to which institutions use innovative or nontraditional assessment methods: performance in capstone courses; portfolios or comprehensive projects; observations of student performance; individual interviews or focus groups (1 = not used; 2 = used in some units; 3 = used in most units; 4 = used in all units). Cronbach alpha = .61.
External methods	Two item factorially-derived scale. (I C 8-9) Reflects the extent to which institutions use assessment methods that data from external constituencies: employer interviews or focus groups; alumni interviews or focus groups (1 = not used; 2 = used in some units; 3 = used in most units; 4 = used in all units). Cronbach alpha = .63.
Transcript analysis	Single item. (I C 5) Reflects extent to which institutions use transcript analysis to collect student assessment information (1 = not used; 2 = used in some units; 3 = used in most units; 4 = used in all units).
External examination	Single item. (I C 6) Reflects extent to which institutions use external examinations to collect student assessment information (1 = not used; 2 = used in some units; 3 = used in most units; 4 = used in all units).
Interviews of withdrawing students	Single item. (I C 7) Reflects extent to which institutions use interviews with withdrawing students to collect student assessment information (1 = not used; 2 = used in some units; 3 = used in most units; 4 = used in all units).

Variable	Definition
Student sub-populations	Four single items. (I D 1-4) Reflect the use of different assessment methods for the following different student populations: a = adult students; b = part-time students; c = minority students; d = distance education students (1 = different method; 2 = same method).
Number of studies	Nine item additive index. (I E 1-9) Reflects the number of studies institutions conduct on the relationship between aspects of students' institutional experiences and performance: course-taking patterns; exposure to different teaching methods; patterns of student-faculty interaction; extra-curricular activities; residence arrangements; financial aid and/or employment; admission standards or policies; academic advising patterns; classroom, library and/or computing resources (1 = conduct study; 0 = do not conduct study).
Number of reports	Five item additive index. (I F 1-5) Reflects the levels of aggregation at which student assessment data are provided as reports: institution-wide; schools or colleges; academic programs or departments; special populations or subgroups of students; by course or groups of courses (1 = report provided; 0 = report not provided).
Organizational and Administrative Support Patterns	
Mission emphasis	Three item additive index. (II A 1 a-c) Reflects institutions' mission statement emphasis on undergraduate education and its assessment: emphasizes excellence in undergraduate education; identifies educational outcomes intended for students; refers to student assessment as important activity (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Internal purposes	Four item factorially-derived score. (II B 3-6) Reflects the importance of internal institutional purposes for undertaking student assessment: guiding undergraduate academic program improvement; improving achievement of undergraduate students; improving faculty instructional performance; guiding resource allocation decisions (1 = no importance; 2 = minor importance; 3 = moderate importance; 4 = very important). Cronbach alpha = .79.
Accreditation purposes	Single item. (II B 1) Reflects importance of preparing for institutional accreditation self-study as a purpose for undertaking student assessment (1 = no importance; 2 = minor importance; 3 = moderate importance; 4 = very important).
State purposes	Single item. (II B 2) Reflects importance of meeting state reporting requirements as a purpose for undertaking student assessment (1 = no importance; 2 = minor importance; 3 = moderate importance; 4 = very important).
Administrative and governance activities	Seven item additive index. (II C 1-7) Reflects the number of administrative or governance activities used by institutions to promote student assessment: annual institution-wide assessment forums or seminars; rewards or incentives for administrators promoting use of assessment in unit; incentives for academic units to use assessment information; assessment workshops for administrators; board of trustees committee addresses assessment; faculty governance committee addresses assessment; student representation on assessment committees (1 = yes; 0 = no).

Variable	Definition
Administrative and faculty support	Four item additive index. (II D 2-5) Reflects the degree to which chief executive officer, academic and student affairs administrators, and faculty support student assessment (1 = very unsupportive; 2 = somewhat unsupportive; 3 = neutral or unknown; 4 = somewhat supportive; 5 = very supportive).
Type of plan or policy	Seven single items. (II E 1 a-g) Reflects the institutions plan or policy for student assessment: a = formally adopted plan or policy requiring assessment activities for all academic units; b = formally adopted plan or policy requiring assessment activities for some academic units; c = formally adopted plan or policy requiring all academic units to develop their own assessment plan; d = formally adopted plan or policy stipulating institution-wide activities to be conducted by central committee, office, or officer; e = has no formal plan or policy but academic units are encouraged to conduct their own assessment activities; f = is currently developing plan or policy; g = does not have an assessment plan or policy (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Formal centralized policy	Single item. (II E 1 a) Reflects institution has formal institutional plan or policy requiring specified student assessment activities of all academic units or programs (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Institution-wide planning group	Single item. (II E 2) Reflects institution has institution-wide group for student assessment planning and policy setting (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Breadth of assessment planning group	Nine item additive index. (II E 3 a-i) Reflects the number of internal members included in the institution's assessment planning group: chief executive officer; academic affairs administrator(s)/staff; student affairs administrator(s)/staff; institutional research administrator(s)/staff; academic review and evaluation administrator(s) /staff; student assessment administrator(s)/staff; faculty; students; other.
Responsibility for planning group	Seven single items. (II E 4 a-g) Reflect the internal members who have executive responsibility for the institution-wide group responsible for planning or policy-setting for assessment: a = academic affairs administrator; b = student affairs administrator; c = institutional research officer; d = academic review and evaluation officer; e = student assessment officer; f = faculty member; g = other (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Approval authority	Eleven single items. (II E 5 a-k) Reflect the internal members who approve any changes to institutions assessment plan or policy: a = board of trustees; b = chief executive officer; c = chief academic affairs officer; d = chief student affairs officer; e = institutional research officer; f = academic review and evaluation officer; g = student assessment officer; h = student government; i = academic senate or other faculty committees; j = faculty union; k = other (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Operating responsibility	Eight single items. (II E 6 a-h) Reflect the internal members who have operational responsibility for the institution's day-to-day assessment activities: a = academic affairs administrator; b = student affairs administrator; c = institutional research officer; d = academic review and evaluation officer; e = student assessment officer; f = faculty member; g = other; h = no one (1 = yes; 0 = no).

Variable	Definition
Reporting relationship	Six single items. (II E 7 a-f) Reflect the individual to whom person with day-to-day responsibility reports: a = chief executive officer; b = chief academic affairs officer; c = chief student affairs officer; d = institutional research officer; e = academic review and evaluation officer; f = other (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Conducted evaluation	Single item. (II F 1 a-d) Reflects if institution has formally or informally evaluated its student assessment process (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Evaluations elements	Eight single items. (II F 2 a-h) Reflect the elements that were reviewed during the institutions assessment evaluation: a = student assessment plan or policies; b = structure and responsibility for assessment; c = achievement of intended objectives; d = reliability and validity of instruments and methods; e = quality of data analysis; f = use of information in institutional decision-making; g = problems encountered; h = comparison of costs and benefits (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Assessment Management Policies and Practices	
Budget decisions	Two item additive index. (IV A 3-4) Reflects formal use of assessment information in the budget process: to competitively allocate resources among academic units; to reward academic units for improvement (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Computer support	Three item additive index. (IV B 2-4) Reflects institutional capacity to collect and manage student assessment information: computerized student information system includes student performance indicators; student information system tracks individual students; student assessment database integrated with other institutional databases (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Access to information	Five item additive index. (IV C 1-5) Reflects internal accessibility of assessment information on individual students by: institutional research or assessment professionals; senior academic administrators; department chairs or academic program administrators; student affairs professionals; faculty advisors (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Distribution of reports	Six item additive index. (IV D 1-6) Reflects the number of constituent groups to whom student assessment reports are regularly distributed: students; faculty; academic administrators; student affairs professionals; employers; general public (1 = yes; 0 = no).
Student involvement	Three item factorially-derived scale. (IV E 1,3,4) Reflects the extent to which institutions have policies or practices to promote student involvement in assessment activities: inform students about assessment purposes and uses; require students to participate in assessment activities; provide students with individual feedback on assessment results (1 = not done at all; 2 = done in a few departments; 3 = done in some departments; 4 = done in many departments; 5 = done in most departments). Cronbach alpha = .69.

Variable	Definition
Professional development	Four item factorially-derived scale. (IV F 2-5) Reflects existence of professional development policies or practices on student assessment for faculty and academic administrators: provide funds for faculty to attend or present at assessment conferences; offer student assessment workshops or consultation for faculty; provide assistance (e.g., paid leaves, stipends, course reduction) to improve faculty use of student assessment; provide student assessment workshops for academic administrators (1 = not done at all; 2 = done in a few departments; 3 = done in some departments; 4 = done in many departments; 5 = done in most departments). Cronbach alpha = .77.
Student affairs training	Two item factorially-derived scale. (IV F 6-7) Reflects existence of professional development policies or practices on student assessment for student affairs personnel: require assessment training for student affairs staff; provide student assessment workshops for student affairs administrators (1 = not done at all; 2 = done in a few departments; 3 = done in some departments; 4 = done in many departments; 5 = done in most departments). Cronbach alpha = .84.
Faculty evaluation	Five item factorially-derived scale. (IV G 1-5) Reflects existence of faculty evaluation and reward policies and practices related to student assessment: promotion evaluation considers evidence of student performance; salary evaluation considers evidence of student performance; promotion, tenure or salary reviews consider faculty participation in student assessment; promotion, tenure or salary reviews consider scholarship on assessment; public recognition or awards for faculty use of student assessment (1 = not done at all; 2 = done in a few departments; 3 = done in some departments; 4 = done in many departments; 5 = done in most departments). Cronbach alpha = .77.
Academic planning and review	Four item factorially-derived scale. (IV H 1-4) Reflects the incorporation of student assessment data into academic planning and review processes for: academic departments or undergraduate programs; general education or core curriculum; courses; student academic support services (1 = not done at all; 2 = done in a few departments; 3 = done in some departments; 4 = done in many departments; 5 = done in most departments). Cronbach alpha = .84.
Institutional Uses of Student Assessment	
Educational decisions	Ten item factorially-derived scale. (V A 1-5, 8-12) Reflects the influence of student assessment information in educational decisions: revision of undergraduate academic mission or goals; designing or reorganizing academic programs or majors; designing or reorganizing student affairs units; allocating resources to academic units; modifying student assessment plans, policies, or processes; revising or modifying general education curriculum; creating or modifying student out-of-class learning experiences; creating or modifying distance learning initiatives; modifying instructional or teaching methods; modifying student academic support services (1 = no action or influence known; 2 = action taken, data not influential; 3 = action taken, data somewhat influential; 4 = action taken, data very influential). Cronbach alpha = .83.

Variable	Definition
Faculty decisions	Two item factorially-derived scale. (V A 6-7) Reflects the influence of student assessment information in faculty decisions: deciding faculty promotion and tenure; deciding faculty salary increases or rewards (1 = no action or influence known; 2 = action taken, data not influential; 3 = action taken, data somewhat influential; 4 = action taken, data very influential). Cronbach alpha = .79.
Institutional Impacts of Student Assessment	
Faculty impacts	Four item factorially-derived scale. (V B 1-4) Reflects student assessment impacts on faculty: affected campus discussions of undergraduate education; contributed to faculty satisfaction; contributed to faculty interest in teaching; led to changes in teaching methods used (1 = not monitored, do not know; 2 = monitored, negative impact; 3 = monitored, no known impact; 4 = monitored, positive impact). Cronbach alpha = .79.
Student impacts	Four item factorially-derived scale. (V B 5-8) Reflects student assessment impacts on students: contributed to student satisfaction; affected student retention or graduation rates; affected student grade performance; affected student achievement on external examinations (1 = not monitored, do not know; 2 = monitored, negative impact; 3 = monitored, no known impact; 4 = monitored, positive impact). Cronbach alpha = .82.
External impacts	Seven item factorially-derived scale. (V B 9-15) Reflects student assessment impacts on external constituents: affected student applications or acceptance rates; affected allocation or share of state funding; affected evaluation from regional accrediting agency; affected private fund-raising results; affected success on grant applications; affected communications with external constituents; affected institutional reputation or image (1 = not monitored, do not know; 2 = monitored, negative impact; 3 = monitored, no known impact; 4 = monitored, positive impact). Cronbach alpha = .82.

[1] Assessment of Teaching and Learning for Improvement and Public Accountability: State Governing, Coordinating Board and Regional Accreditation Association Policies and Practices (Cole et al., 1997)

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